

THE NARRATOR, THE EXPOSITOR,
AND THE PROMPTER
IN EUROPEAN MEDIEVAL THEATRE

VISIT...

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THE NARRATOR, THE EXPOSITOR,
AND THE PROMPTER
IN EUROPEAN MEDIEVAL THEATRE

Edited by

Philip Butterworth



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This book is dedicated to the memory of
Lynette R. Muir, friend and colleague
of contributors to this volume.

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Philip Butterworth
Kirkburton
March 2007

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Elsa Strietman

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Peter Meredith

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INTRODUCTION

Philip Butterworth

My interest in the territory of this book has arisen out of an examination of the prompter who operates in full view of the audience and offers *all* the lines to the players. In 2001 at the *SITM Colloquium*, Groningen, I directed a version of the *Towneley Second Shepherds' Play* which focussed on this convention. Here, many of the audience responses were concerned with the figure of the prompter as he was seen to operate simultaneously both 'inside' and 'outside' the action of the play in its communication. Such a role and its function is fascinating, not only in its own right, but also in relation to how it might inform us about the nature and purpose of presented theatre. The ability of such a figure to move in and out of the action, and thus different realities, characterizes a relationship to the action and the audience. The same fascination exists in relation to roles of the narrator and the expositor who can also operate simultaneously 'inside' and 'outside' the action of given plays even though the roles may embody different purpose, form, and function. Sometimes these roles are overt ones; sometimes they 'double up' with roles of actors, personages, or characters. These figures are of pivotal significance in the communication of those plays in which they operate.

The purpose of this book is to investigate the nature of these roles in order to identify their influence upon performance of relevant plays. The central question to be addressed is: How do the 'inside' and 'outside' roles of the narrator, expositor, and prompter affect the nature of the presented and communicated work?

Each of the essays in this volume focuses on the above question. The trio of functionaries with which this book is concerned does not feature in every article. Some authors only focus on one of these roles. Elsa Strietman, however, does examine all three roles in relation to her concern for drama of the Low Countries, and thus her paper provides a suitable opening to the book. She discusses a breadth of issues that may be seen to introduce some of the major concerns developed elsewhere in the work. Strietman is concerned with the guidance and

instruction provided by these functionaries. Next follow two papers by Peter Happé and Nerida Newbiggin in which they provide focus upon organization and modes of presentation in France, Germany, and Italy. The following three papers by John McKinnell, Jolanta Rzegocka, and Max Harris are each concerned with the narration and expository delivery of stories. John McKinnell's paper poses questions to be faced in a projected modern production of Albertino di Mussato's *Ecerinis*. This translated Latin text presents issues and working problems for the modern director that demand a thorough understanding of the role of the narrator. Jolanta Rzegocka introduces a western European audience to the roles of narrator and expositor in early modern theatre in Poland with an emphasis on the theatrical task of telling stories. The need to 'tell the story' through the expository narrator is further examined by Max Harris in its application to Spanish puppetry. Four papers follow with a concentration on the functions of narrators, expositors, and prompters who operate as dramatic devices and personages within the narrative reality. Milla Riggio focuses on some of the English moralities while Mario Longtin concentrates on some of the French Mystery plays. Thomas Pettitt and Christine Dymkowski both concentrate on Shakespeare's use of historical material. Each of these authors teases out the implicit functions of narrator, expositor, and prompter from their respective characters. Two further papers by Alan Hindley and Peter Meredith focus on the nature of authorial and scribal invention. Hindley concentrates on the preaching function within the expository role in the French moralités and the characters who fulfill such purpose. Meredith's paper examines the identity and authorial intention in the establishment of Contemplacio in the English N.town plays. The final two papers by David Mills and me are concerned with the implicit and explicit nature and function of English book holders in their respective contexts. Mills concentrates his analysis on the Chester plays and I re-examine Richard Carew's Cornish 'Ordinary'.

These papers thus effectively promote themselves into self-selected associations through their specific and identifiable points of focus. The same may be said of the ordering of these associated groupings. There are inevitable overlaps between the related areas which are delineated as follows: (1) *Guidance*; (2) *Organization and Modes*; (3) *Narration of Stories*; (4) *Narrators, Expositors, and Prompters as Dramatic Devices and Content*; (5) *Authorial and Scribal Invention*; (6) *Book Holders*.

Guidance

Elsa Strietman's essay, although dealing with specific issues arising out of Rhetorician plays of the Low Countries, presents an overview of many of the central

issues concerning the roles of narrators, expositors, and prompters as they affect the content and purpose of their plays. Other contributors pick up many of the issues that she raises and develop them within the specific contexts of their plays. Although written evidence of prompters, in Strietman's definition, is scant, more appropriate evidence may be found in iconographic material and financial accounts concerning performance. She discusses the inferences that may be drawn from such visual material. There are, however, figures in the drama of the Rhetoricians who can be seen to fulfil the functions of narrator and expositor among their other functions. Such personages as the *sinnekens* who are the allegorical embodiments of tendencies and emotions which lead mankind astray, may be judged as providing implicit prompting. They are in some measure comparable to the English Vices but they always operate in pairs, often in separate scenes apart from the main action, and are more diverse in their functions. Other characters which operate on occasion as narrators or expositors are those in the so-called 'minder-manstonelen', scenes, often comic and separate from the main action, with lowly characters who comment on the events, emotions, or actions of the play. In addition to these figures there are prologue and epilogue speakers who remain anonymous but function as narrators and expositors, and there are also characters in 'outer' plays who can be judged to function as narrative and expository figures with regard to the 'inner' plays.

Organization and Modes

Peter Happé's paper examines ways in which expositor figures were used in some cycle plays in France and Germany. Happé discusses Mercadé's *La Vengeance Jesu Christ*, one of the earliest examples of a cycle play in France, where the expository functions were divided between 'Le Prescheur' and 'Le Meneur du Jeu'. The main contribution, however, comes from Gréban's *Passion*, which appeared c. 1450. Here, the expositor managed the audience, invited participation in devotions and preaching, and controlled development of the narrative for the four days of performance. This cycle was influential. It was extensively modified by Jean Michel for a performance at Angers in 1486, and Michel's work, with discernibly different intentions, was then printed. By this means it became the basis for many other cycle texts and performances throughout France. German examples offer a number of similar practices, but here there are much stronger processional and musical aspects affecting the way the expositors were used. Happé examines these roles in the Künzelsau *Fronleichnamspiel*. Allusion is also made to the cycle plays from Lucerne and Alsfeld where conditions were somewhat different.

Nerida Newbigin re-examines assumptions arising from Italian play texts from 1300 to 1520. Existing thinking proposes that the plays were introduced by a choric figure, the 'festaiuolo', who was often presented as an angel and who remained on the stage during the action of the plays as a mediator between the audience and the events presented. This view has become accepted without question, but closer examination of these texts shows that there is seldom a choric figure on stage and that the term 'festaiuolo' has a very different meaning. The plays do, however, have a repertoire of devices for directing the gaze which change over time and are ultimately transformed in the sixteenth century as new theatrical modes that triumph over old devotional modes.

Narration of Stories

John McKinnell's paper draws upon modern production problems, issues, and questions. He tackles the central question of this book with some further questions and proposals to produce the *Ecerinis* of Albertino di Mussato (c. 620). Here, dramatic and theatrical questions are focussed through the play as a means of preparation for its performance with a modern audience. The inbuilt compromises concerning such a task are well considered as illustrated by some of the following questions. Can the presentation of tragedy through narration and mime still be effective today, despite cultural differences? And what determines 'effectiveness' in this context? Is it important to let characters speak in their own voices at moments of particular importance? The action of *Ecerinis* covers a period of nearly fifty years so how might communication of this time-span operate as continuous action? What is the theatrical relationship between the Narrator and the Chorus? Since the script offers no indication as to whether characters are 'on stage', except when it their turn to speak, to what extent (if at all) should they be present when they have nothing to say? Although these types of questions are necessary to confront conceptual and practical decisions concerning production of the play today, they are equally valid as ones that might be addressed to most of the plays analysed in this volume as a means of assessing their relative purpose, dynamics, and resultant identity. Indeed, similar questions are posed throughout the volume.

Jolanta Rzegocka shows that early modern popular theatre in Poland reserved a special place for the narrator or expositor who bridged the historical with the allegorical in the play. Although there is no evidence of 'doubling up' of roles with actors or onstage prompting, as in the Rhetoricians plays, the often authoritative voice of 'prologue' and 'epilogue' speaker retells episodes of a play and his role

merges with that of a 'Gospel reader' throughout the play. He is thus situated on the play's dramatic metalevel and may be regarded as a prompter, if successive Gospel readings were to be seen as hints towards the dramatic action. The chapter examines the roles of expositors or 'evangelists', as they are sometimes called, in a number of popular biblical plays from Poland (Easter, Palm Sunday, Saint Anne, and Isaac plays). Rzegocka focuses on the form and language of the prologues and their delivery techniques as recorded in stage directions that require switches between first- and second-person narrative, changes in the tone of voice, and use of gesture. The essay also discusses interpretation and comic functions of the prologues and epilogues as well as their capacity to establish the connection between the plays in a festive cycle.

The territory examined by Max Harris shifts the focus into puppetry and, what is more, into literary sources as evidence. The associated problems of discussing this kind of evidence are handled by Harris in such a way as to demonstrate that literary evidence can sometimes be examined along with textual evidence and, if pursued with sufficient care, can produce similar authority to that of other forms. The chapter begins with two questions about the expository narrator in early Spanish theatre: was there such a person and, if so, what was his (or, in at least one fictional instance, her) role? Gathering evidence from literary sources no less than from dramatic texts, the first question is confidently answered in the affirmative. With regard to the second question, discussion centres upon the portrait of a jongleur-narrator in a twelfth-century Arabic poem from al-Andalus, the narrative role of Alfonso X el Sabio in possible stagings of the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* at his own court, the role of the foolish-shepherd narrator in the plays of Diego Sánchez de Badajoz, and a variety of expository narrators in the early seventeenth-century puppet theatre. Some concluding remarks are offered about the ways in which the expository narrator allowed a sophisticated playwright such as Diego Sánchez de Badajoz to shape the relationship between audience and stage in ways that are not readily available to the author or director of a self-contained play.

Narrators, Expositors, and Prompters as Dramatic Devices and Content

Milla Riggio's paper concentrates on three of the English morality plays: *The Castle of Perseverance*, *Mankind*, and *Wisdom Who Is Christ*. Here, Riggio identifies criteria by which narrator and expositor roles operate implicitly within the plays. She concentrates on the preaching function and the direct link between audience and actors within a commonly identified cosmology. Discussion takes place concerning the way that the plays both involve their audience and distance

it. Layering of realities within the plays is considered in relation to those imposed upon audiences. Such concerns are filtered through discussion of likely venues, or types of venues, in which the plays might have been performed. In each of these considerations it is the respective texts from which answers are sought. This leads Riggio to conclude that 'virtually every character in these three plays participates in the expository outreach of the drama to its audience'.

According to Mario Longtin, the French Mystery plays have been analysed too often from a strictly theological standpoint. The importance of such orientation towards medieval culture in understanding the genre is of considerable value, but the specificity of the writing, the dramatic structures of the plays, and the specific devices that identify these plays as theatre need to be given more focussed attention. Here, Longtin concentrates on three characters, the 'Prologue', the 'Stultus', and the 'Messenger', and the roles they play in the delivery of the French Mystery plays. He shows that the function of the Prologue is not limited to summarizing action to be performed. The Prologue allegorizes the characters and gives them a life that precedes the diegesis. As for the Stultus, his unique position as both an extra- and intra-diegetic character allows him a freedom that is nothing short of extraordinary on stage. In the *Mistère de saint Quentin* there are numerous written interventions by the Stultus, interventions that shed light on the central role played by the character. Finally, the Messenger modifies the space by the power of his words. He delivers messages from one location to another, and by naming the space he transforms it without the need of scenery. These three characters are framing entities devised to serve the story but first of all to serve the theatre.

The essay by Thomas Pettitt extends the range of work so far considered by recognizing that a significant development in the English theatre took place through theatrical articulation of the division (via material, visual, aural, and conceptual means) between the imagined world of the stage and the lived world of the audience. Overt narration, exposition, and prompting, which was organic to the purpose of medieval theatre, is in contrast alien to most conventional theatre in modern times. Pettitt regards the Elizabethan theatre in general, and the plays of Shakespeare in particular, as standing at a decisive moment of transition between medieval and modern dramaturgical systems that are well placed to illustrate the differences. Whatever else they may be about, most of Shakespeare's plays are about theatre. More specifically, Shakespeare's plays-within-plays tend to reproduce the late medieval traditions of household theatre (notably in the form of masques and interludes at great-house revels), including their characteristically overt dramaturgical machinery. The host plays in which such historical reconstructions occur themselves belong to a more sophisticated dramaturgical regime,

but one which was sufficiently confident in its own integrity to encompass overt dramaturgical machinery within its metadrama. With occasional references to *Hamlet* and other plays, and against the background of medieval interludes and mummers' plays, this essay focuses on the contrasts and parallels between the extrovertly medieval dramaturgy of 'Pyramus and Thisbe' and the self-consciously knowing medieval dramaturgy of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Christine Dymkowski's essay concentrates on another Shakespeare play that also looks backwards for its inspiration and content by focussing on the uniqueness of Shakespeare's use of Gower as narrator in *Pericles*. This chapter examines Gower's function in Shakespeare's text: that is, the conjectured meaning of a historical figure to Shakespeare's audience, how he is used in the play, and how that fits in with Shakespeare's oeuvre and the traditions on which it draws. The chapter examines how modern productions have negotiated the issues and challenges of making the character work for a modern audience: for example, how much of Gower's original function can be maintained and how and to what extent it changes when the character is portrayed, for instance, as a caretaker-cum-teacher, as he was recently in Neil Bartlett's production. Does such modernization promote or detract from the structural and theatrical importance of the character as narrator? Besides Bartlett's, performed at the Lyric, Hammersmith (2003), the chapter examines other significant productions, such as Declan Donnellan's for Cheek by Jowl (1984), Phyllida Lloyd's for the National Theatre (1994), Yukio Ninagawa's Japanese production seen at the National Theatre (2003), the Royal Shakespeare Company's co-production with Cardboard Citizens (2003), and RSC productions by Terry Hands (1969), Ron Daniels (1979), David Thacker (1989), and Adrian Noble (2002).

Authorial and Scribal Invention

The relationship between preaching and plays has long been recognized as a significant feature of medieval drama, particularly in the realm of moralizing theatre, where the separation of the real-life situation of the audience and the fictive world of the action is essential to the didactic framework. Aspects of this key expository function are examined by Alan Hindley in this chapter on the corpus of late medieval French moralités which, like sermons, aimed to instruct audiences in matters of Christian doctrine, religious polemics, or even secular ethics. In plays that sometimes resemble dramatized exempla, expository characters, variously designated as 'L'Hermite', 'Le Messagier', 'Nuncius', 'Preco', 'Le Docteur', helped to subordinate the theatrical illusion in performances that were meant not just as

entertainment but also as instruction. Aspects of characterization, both allegorical personifications and real-life figures, are considered here, as is the function of the Fool character, who appears as a distinctive comic variant to more formal expository counterparts, providing a means of explaining the significance of their fictional action taking place before the audience in terms of their own spiritual journey. In addition to standard examples of the genre such as *Bien Advisé Mal Advisé*, *La Moralité de Charité*, *La Condamnation de Banquet*, evidence is drawn from lesser-known plays, including the unpublished *Le Monde qui tourne le dos a Chascun* of Jean d' Abondance.

To what extent is the expository identity of 'Contemplacio' in the N.town manuscript a scribal development? Peter Meredith's chapter draws attention to the position of Contemplacio, 'the introducer, expositor, continuity man, and concluder' of what has come to be known as the *Mary Play* as contained in the N.town manuscript. Meredith argues that Contemplacio's inclusion serves to strengthen the case for the *Mary Play* as a separate entity within the N.town manuscript. Contemplacio's role and identity changes through his various appearances. Before the Parliament of Heaven he is a character, and Meredith discusses the notion that this character was once two. His later speeches are also considered as is the derivation of his name, the tone conveyed by his words, and his identity. He is compared with Poeta in *The Conversion of St Paul*.

Book Holders

The role of the explicit expositor is further considered by David Mills in his discussion of the Chester plays. The chapter begins with consideration of the relevance of Langland's personification of 'Book' which has a potentially visible presence in the plays via (a) the official text and (b) a prompter. Further consideration is given to God as the book author and potential prompter. In Chester there is a link to the final coda of the four evangelists referring the audience to their book as a framing device. Developed discussion takes place of the expositor as reader, abridger, and summarizer through consideration of terms used, roles occupied, and effects produced. Discussion of two further roles that stand outside the dramatic action and create a double frame occurs in relation to *Princeps Synagoga* and the Expositor in Play 5, 'Moses and the Law; Balaack and Balaam'. Finally, consideration is given to Preco as a controller of Play 4, 'Abraham, Lot, and Melchysedeck; Abraham and Isaac'.

Although the convention of prompting, as it is understood today, is evident in the performance of the Rhetoricians plays, as discussed by Elsa Strietman in the

first essay in this volume, a different concept of prompting may be seen in the description offered by Richard Carew in his *Survey of Cornwall* (1602) concerning performance of the Cornish *Guary miracle*. My own paper re-examines Carew's description of the sixteenth-century Cornish 'Ordinary' and concludes that this prompting functionary may be seen as the first English director. These presentations were performed in the round, and the Ordinary followed the players around the space and prompted in full view of the audience by telling the actors 'softly what they must pronounce aloud'. Despite the apparent clarity of Carew's description many questions arise in relation to the nature and purpose of this activity when set against modern understanding of the process of prompting. Did Carew's Ordinary function in the same way as a modern prompter? It seems that he did not. This chapter examines the inherent nature and purpose of Carew's Ordinary and reveals additional expository and directorial functions.

Just as the roles of narrator, expositor, and prompter demonstrate a capacity to exist both 'inside' and 'outside' the dramatic action, and operate easily and purposefully as mechanisms in the didactic communication of respective plays, so too is there an imaginative ability of an audience to recognize and respond to such dual and alternating existence. The strength of this kind of flexible mechanism derives from the straightforward intention to teach through telling stories in theatrical form. The same mechanisms that permit story-tellers to move in and out of the narrative by changing from first-person to third-person narrative finds its theatrical equivalent through the roles of narrator and expositor. The essays in this book tackle the dynamic and structural importance of these figures and demonstrate a rich diversity in the expression of some common didactic purpose.

‘EVERY MAN, I WYLL GO WITH THEE AND BE THY GYDE’:
NARRATORS, EXPOSITORS, AND PROMPTERS
IN THE DRAMA OF THE LOW COUNTRIES

Elsa Strietman

Introduction

In Rhetoricians drama narrators, expositors, or prompters are not often explicitly presented. Their functions are, however, frequently part of *dramatis personae* with other tasks and characteristics. To set this in context, the three functions will be defined as follows:

1. *The Prompter*: a person invisible to the audience, who has no ‘role’ in the illusory reality of the play but a function in the smooth performance of the play and does so by aiding actors uncertain of their lines.
2. *The Expositor*: a person who is either a prologue or epilogue speaker and/or one of the *dramatis personae* and who explains to the audience the significance of an action, an event, a tableau which is visible on the stage but which needs additional information to be understood.
3. *The Narrator*: a person who is either a prologue or epilogue speaker and/or one of the *dramatis personae* and who conveys to the audience information, or an action, or an event which is not shown or acted out on the stage.

The three functions and their carriers will be examined in the context of some central characteristics in Rhetoricians drama. Firstly, these consist of playwrights who frequently employed visual images and spoken text together to convey the message of the plays; the images were then explained by a character ‘acting’ as expositor. Secondly, internal expositors and narrators can be guides and instructors in allegorical drama, or ‘sinnekens’ (allegorical embodiments of tendencies or emotions which lead mankind astray), or ‘secondary’ characters such as those in

‘minderemans tonelen’, scenes with lowly characters, often comic, separate from the main action. And thirdly, Rhetoricians emphasized skills with, and pleasure in, words and eloquent speech as indispensable for their art. These aspects and the allegorical conventions they developed are most effective in the interaction between characters rather than in monologues. This may in part explain the absence of explicit, separate expositors and narrators.

Prompters

Philip Butterworth has offered examples towards a different definition of the prompter than the one outlined above and has illustrated this with a performance during the *SITM Colloquium* in Groningen in 2001, a performance which sparked a lively debate. He has defined one kind of prompter as a figure ‘in full view of the audience’ who supplies the actors with their lines, not because they have forgotten them but because they have no previous knowledge of them. Some iconographic evidence exists which accords to parts of both definitions, and it is also clear that in some instances the functions of prompter and stage director were combined.¹

Wim Hummelen, in an extensive discussion of iconographic material relating to drama depicted in paintings of village or peasants’ fairs, includes two paintings and a print with prompters.² They show a simple booth stage with a curtained-off ‘backstage’ space. In the corner, in a gap between the front and the side curtain, is a figure, identifiable as male because of his hat, holding up a paper with writing quite close to his face, as if keeping close track of the progress of the play (Fig. 1). Hummelen suggests that these figures were ‘boeckhouders’ (bookkeepers), that

¹ See Philip Butterworth, ‘Prompting in Full View of the Audience: The Groningen Experiment’, *Medieval English Theatre*, 23 (2002 [for 2001]), 122–71.

² W. M. H. Hummelen, ‘Toneel op de kermis, van Bruegel tot Bredero’, *Oud-Holland*, 103 (1989), 1–45 (pp. 4–5, 6–8, 33–34). The paintings in question are one by Pieter Balten (c. 1525–c. 1598) or Pieter Bruegel the Younger (?1568–1638), Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, A.2554, based on an earlier painting by Pieter Bruegel the Elder (c. 1525–69), as well as a print based on Bruegel the Elder, the so-called *Temperantia* print in the Rijksprentenkabinet, Amsterdam. The second is ascribed to P. Bruegel the Younger in the Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Brussels, 6870. They both belong to a group of paintings which Hummelen links together as the ‘Playerwaterkermis’ since the performance in the village fairs can be identified as the farce *Playerwater*. See ‘*Playerwater*: A Sixteenth-Century Farce with an English Translation’, ed. by H. van Dijk, J. Fenoulhet, T. Guest, Th. Hermans, E. Strietman, and P. Vincent, *Dutch Crossing*, 23 (1984), 32–81.

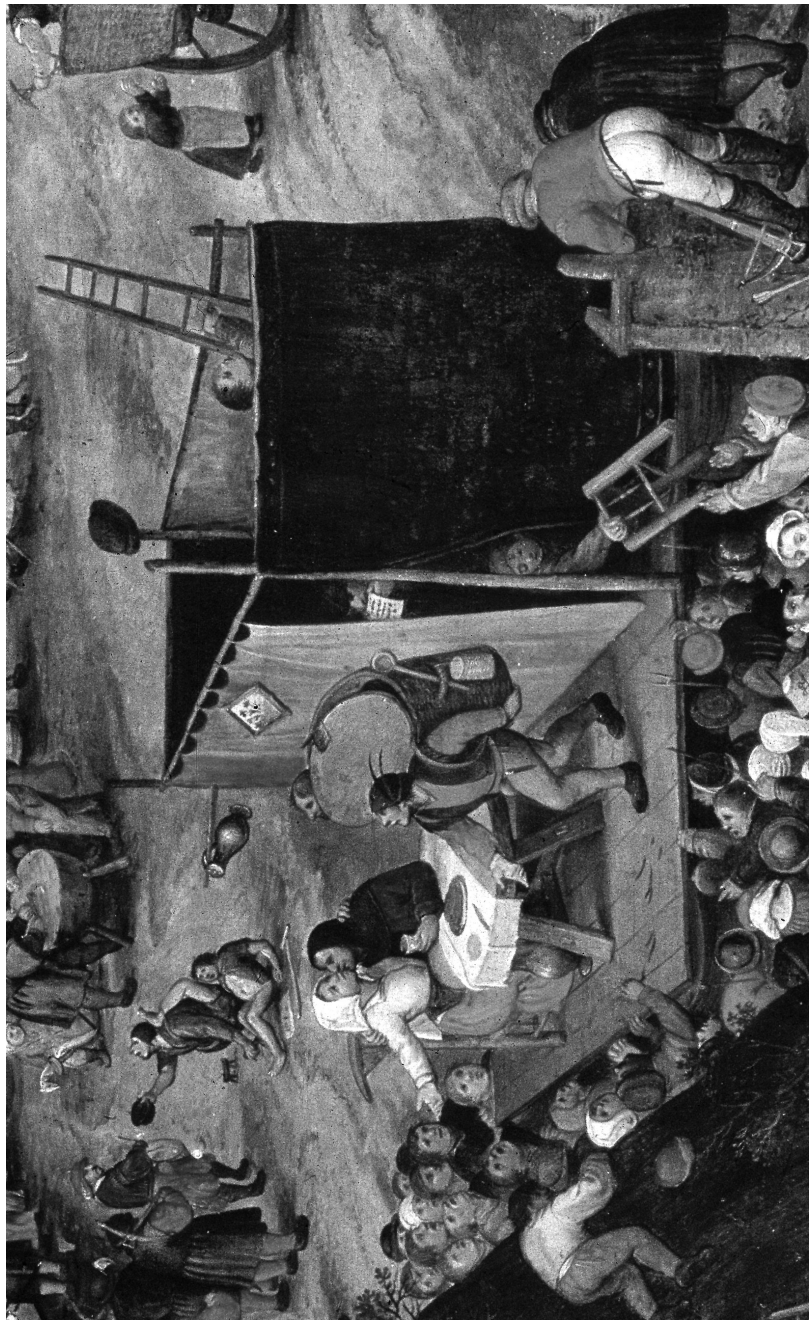


Figure 1. P. Bruegel the Younger. Detail of Fair with a play and a procession;
behind the curtain the prompter/director holding a text is visible.
Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Brussels, nr. 6870. By permission of the Koninklijk Museum, Brussels.

is, prompters and stage directors and thus with a wider function than just prompting. Two 'caerten', detailed invitations with programme specifications, to Rhetoricians competitions, show that in Hulst (1483) it was required that the spectators should not be able to see the bookkeeper plainly, and in Antwerp in 1496 that the 'boeckhouder' should be 'bedeckt', hidden.³ The evidence on the paintings shows that, though the figures with the scripts are not in full view of the audience, they are partly visible. Hummelen suggests that 'bedeckt' in the 1483 and 1496 invitations might not mean 'totally invisible'. He also comments that the farce depicted on the paintings was not part of a competition but that the painters are unlikely to have rendered their subject in this way if a visible prompter had been unacceptable. He strengthens that argument by pointing out that the Temperantia print depicts a play about Rhetorica and that it can not be supposed that a depiction of the art of the Rhetoricians is likely to show 'a technically deficient' performance.⁴ At the same time it must be remembered that visual images have to depict what they want to convey: within existing contemporary painting conventions it is not possible to depict a hidden prompter.

The two instances of fifteenth-century textual evidence from Hulst and Antwerp stipulate unequivocally, it would seem to me, a requirement that the prompter/stage director should be hidden ('bedeckt'). Then there are three sixteenth-century visual bits of evidence showing a half-visible person who is very likely prompting. The textual evidence comes from formal documents pertaining to competitions, the visual evidence from, respectively, two scenes depicting an individual performance of a farce in an informal setting, a village fair, and one emblematic print. The print is a learned composite affair showing, amongst others, an allegorical play about the first of the seven liberal arts, Rhetoric.

It may be that the requirements with regard to prompters (visible, half-visible, in full view of the audience) changed with time (all the visual material comes from the sixteenth century), or with the degree of formality of the performance. Certainly, in the Antwerp invitation the hidden prompter is mentioned only in relation to the *spel van sinne*, the allegorical play, a serious part of the competition:

³ Butterworth, 'Prompting', p. 125, and P. J. Brand, 'De geschiedenis van de Hulsterse rederijkers', *Jaarboek Oudheidkundige Kring 'De Vier Ambachten' van Hulst* (1660–1661), p. 118.

⁴ Hummelen, 'Toneel', pp. 33–34, and E. van Autenboer, 'Een "Landjuweel" te Antwerpen in 1496?', *Jaarboek De Fonteyne*, 29 (1978–79), 125–49 (p. 144); J. F. Willems, 'Oorkonden van Rederykkamers. I. Pryskaarte van de Rederykkamer der stad Hulst: De Transfiguratie. 7 september 1483', *Belgisch Museum*, 4 (1840), 411–26.

Inden iersten wat geselschappe van rhetoricken dbeste, verstandelijckste ende constichste spel spellen sal, deducerende daer mede d’oirboirelijckste ende meeste misterie oft gratie die godt tot des menschen salicheijt geordonneert ende verleent heeft ende dat bij schrifturen figuren ende naturelijcke redenen nieff dicht nieuwen sin gespelt sijnde best gepronuntieert ende minst fauten niet min dan vijfde ende niet meer dan achte sprekende personen t’spel niet cortere dan vijfhonderde ende niet langer dan sevenhondert regulen den boeckhoudere bedeckt sijnde sal winnen voor den hooghsten ende iersten prijs drij rijckelijcke silvere kannen wegende samen sesse vlaemsche mercken.

[First of all whatever company of rhetoric will perform the best, most intelligent and artistic play, showing the most beneficial and greatest mystery or grace which God has ordained and granted towards man’s salvation and that will be performed according to scripture, with tableaux and according to natural reason, in new verse, a new meaning (never performed before), with the best pronunciation, the fewest mistakes and no less than five and no more than eight speaking characters, not shorter than five hundred and no longer than seven hundred lines, the prompter/stage director hidden, shall win the highest and the first prize: three expensive silver jugs weighing together six Flemish marks.]⁵

There are a number of indications that on certain occasions the Rhetoricians had little time to get, quite literally, their act together and that therefore actors might have been much in need of a prompter. For instance, the victory of Charles V over François I of France in the battle of Pavia on 24 February 1525 was celebrated in Brugge with a contest of *spelen van sinne* on 12 March 1525. The

⁵ Van Autenboer, ‘Een “Landjuweel”’, p. 144, where it is also stated that a Flemish marc weighed six ounces, i.e. 600 grams. Six Flemish *marcs* therefore was a weighty prize in all respects and reflects the respect accorded to the *spel van sinne*. The second prize for the *spel van sinne* was three *marcs*. For comparison: prizes for other parts of the programme vary from one ounce to two and a half *marcs*. This text also indicates that the Rhetoricians attached great importance to the delivery of the text on stage: pronunciation needed to be clear and mistakes were penalized. The Hulst text stresses another aspect (besides the fact that the prompter needs to be hidden): ‘item so wie prijs winnen wille zal hem wachten van schuym ende vilonie, zweeren, vloucken, rampen, in zijn twee principaele spelen, ende dat men den bouchouwere niet bloot en ziet staen, dat hem elc voorzie van waghene ende habijten, ende van alsulcker ghereescap, als eenen yghelicke van noode weesen za’ (Item anyone who wants to be considered for a prize must guard against using foul words and evil language, swearing, cursing and ranting, in his two principal plays, and (take care that) one cannot see the prompter/director, that everybody provides his own waggons and costumes and all such gear as will be needed for their own use). Propriety, prudence, and good organization were clearly thought important. Actors who misbehaved were punished, as is clear from the outer play of *Van Eneas en Dido* (see below) where it turns out that the two characters who are actors *manqué* have been thrown out of their Chamber and crossed off the register for bad behaviour and foul language on stage (Cornelis van Ghistele, ‘Van Eneas en Dido’, ed. by K. Iwema, *Jaarboek De Fonteyne*, 33 (1982–83), 103–243 (pp. 234–40, in particular lines 2292–98, 2243)). Willems, ‘Oorkonden van Rederykkamers’, p. 416.

competition had been announced on the 8th of March. The news that Charles had achieved a victory, rather than suffered a defeat, is likely to have reached the town Rhetoricians who could have started preparations, but even so there was very little time available to write and rehearse the play. A year later, on 14 January 1526, another advantageous treaty between Charles V and François I was concluded which was celebrated in Brugge with a drama competition on 19 February 1526, and again there was little time to write and produce the plays. A large contest took place in Brugge on 23 August 1529 after the Paix des Dames had been concluded in Cambrai on 3 August, and announced in the town on 17 August. These are just some instances in which the Rhetoricians had to work at great speed and, although there is no evidence for this, it would seem that prompters would have had their work cut out.⁶

Butterworth has given examples of different instances of prompting and stage managing and made suggestions about the theatrical or metadramatic impact of such techniques.⁷ A visible and audible prompter is likely to have created a different balance of power between actor and prompter than a half-visible and/or not so audible prompter. A visible prompter is also likely to have affected the illusory reality of the play.⁸ The evidence I have offered here with regard to the Low Countries seems to limit the function of prompters to the strictly practical: that is, to help actors with their lines and possibly with their cues.

Expositors and Narrators

In the drama of the Rhetoricians, the functions of narrator and expositor do exist, but it is my contention, at present, that they function in implicit ways, that they are seldom 'only' narrators or expositors. There are, however, anonymous prologue or epilogue speakers who function as narrators or expositors and do not form part of the main play.⁹ Their anonymity does not detract from the importance of their

⁶ These and other events are discussed in W. M. N. Hüsken, 'Politics and Drama: The City of Bruges as Organizer of Drama Festivals', in *The Stage as Mirror: Civic Theatre in Late Medieval Europe*, ed. by Alan E. Knight (Cambridge: Brewer, 1997), pp. 165–88 (pp. 172–74).

⁷ Butterworth, 'Prompting'.

⁸ See below the section about narrators and their varying positions in the play.

⁹ That occurs frequently in plays written for Chambers of Rhetoric where the prologue or epilogue speaker may present himself as a representative of the Chamber who introduces the play and, at the end, sums up its significance.

function or limit their multitasking possibilities.¹⁰ Narrators or expositors can be part of an outer play and in that case they do interact with other characters.¹¹

Actors who operate as narrators and expositors amongst their other functions are, in the main, the 'guides' and 'instructors' in allegorical *spelen van sinne*. There are others whose functions include that of narrator or expositor and who may even be doing a kind of prompting, namely the *sinneken*s. They are in some measure comparable to the English Vices but they always operate in pairs, often in separate scenes apart from the main action, and they are more diverse in their functions than the Vices.

Other characters which operate on occasion as narrators or expositors are those in the so-called 'minderemanstonelen' scenes, often comic and in varying degrees separate from the main action, with lowly characters who comment on the events, emotions, or actions in the play. Such characters do of course abound in Shakespeare's plays but were beginning to make an appearance in Dutch drama in the middle of the sixteenth century.¹²

¹⁰ See the section on *Bliscapen* below.

¹¹ Such is the case in *Een Esbattement of sMenschen Sin ende Verganckelijke Schoonheit*, ed. by A. Sassen and others (Zwolle: Tjeenk Willink, 1967). The inner play is framed by an outer play with separate characters. One of these functions both as a character in the interaction of and as an expositor in the outer play. The explanation he proffers is embedded in a dialogue with another character who declares that he did not understand the (inner) play at all. Other examples can be found in the first part of Cornelis van Ghistele's *Van Eneas en Dido* where a mason and a labourer building the walls of Carthage long to stop and have a bite and a pint but are scared of the overseer who is a slave driver. That scene is a preparation for the following episode in which Aeneas and his companions express their astonishment about the immense activity in Carthage which in its turn shows Dido's calibre as a queen. See Cornelis van Ghistele, 'Van Eneas en Dido', ed. by Iwema, pp. 168–69, lines 421–84). It also prepares, by contrast, for the second part of the play: Dido, destroyed by the awareness that Aeneas will abandon her, has lost all incentive and abdicated from all responsibility as a monarch, and Carthage is, as it were, in the process of being deconstructed (see below). Another instance is that in *Abrahams Offerhande* [Abraham's Sacrifice], ed. by G. R. W. Dibbets and W. M. H. Hummelen, *Jaarboek De Fonteyne*, 43–44 (Tweede reeks, 35–36) (1993–94), 129–30, lines 770–80, where Abraham's servants are squabbling: they both want a nap and who is going to look after the donkey? They decide to tie it to a tree 'back there'. Hummelen sees this as a staging device to get the two servants off the stage so that the central scene of the sacrifice will have the whole stage to itself. It also increases the dramatic irony: The servants need to decide who is going to have a nap and what to do with the donkey whilst Abraham needs to decide to go through with the horror of God's command.

¹² Though it could be argued that some of the scenes in the fifteenth-century *Die sevenste bliscap van onser vrouwen*, ed. by W. H. Beuken (Culemborg: Tjeenk Willink/Noorduijn, 1978) fall into the category of *minderemanstonelen*: see below.

The issue arises as to why there seem to be so few explicitly functioning narrators, expositors, and prompters in the drama of the Low Countries. This is especially curious when one considers that Rhetoricians plays were explicitly and implicitly extremely insistent on their educational values. Those values pertained to religion, to morality, to behaviour in private and in public, in office or in personal relationships, to internal psychological interaction as well as to the relationship of the individual with God. The plays show a multitude of diverse, visual and verbal, tactics and devices to disseminate their messages.

That diversity is, however, brought about mainly in interactions shaped by different verse forms, registers, structures, decors, costumes, gestures, poses, and pictures, not in monologues. Rhetorical skills and visual presentations were as important to the Rhetoricians' perception of their 'conste', their art, as their message and their method. The audience was presented with an interaction between characters on the stage which was meant to mirror their own internal interactions, between them and their conscience, their desires, their emotions. The Rhetoricians clearly expected those means of explanation and persuasion to be more effective than monologues by narrators or expositors. They do resort to monologues of exposition and narration, but these are frequently in support of other, verbal and/or visual, means.

The investigation of some characters with narrating, expository, and prompting functions in some of these categories makes it possible to come to a preliminary assessment of the theatrical impact of those figures, of their importance for the entertainment of the spectators and for the transmission of the playwright's message(s) to the audience.

Bliscapen

Several contributors to this volume focus their attention on cycle plays and have found that, in the English, French, and German exponents of that genre, there is much relevant material to be found. In the drama of the Low Countries there are only two survivors of a cycle of seven plays about the joys of Our Lady, *Die eerste bliscap van Maria* and *Die sevenste bliscap van onser vrouwen*. The first recorded performance of the first of the seven plays took place in 1448.¹³ Neither of these

¹³ Each year one play of the cycle was performed and the cycle continued to be performed until c. 1566: cf. *Die eerste bliscap van Maria en Die sevenste bliscap van onser vrouwen*, ed. by W. H. Beuken (Culemborg: Tjeenk Willink/Noorduijn, 1978), pp. 12, 19.

employs explicit narrators or expositors apart from anonymous prologue and epilogue speakers.

Both plays do have anonymous prologue and epilogue speakers. In both cases it is implied that they are representatives of the performing group since they talk about 'our feast', 'our play', 'our art'.¹⁴ They ask, the usual 'apologia', for understanding for the simplicity of their art and exhort the audience to be silent. They greet the audience, the notables of the town, Brussels, and, in the case of the *Eerste bliscap*, the rulers of the Low Countries:

Onsen prince ende oec sijn vrouwe,
Ende Charloot, onsen jongen here
Met sijnder vrouwe.¹⁵

[Our prince and also his lady
and Charles, our young lord
with his lady.]

The larger part of the prologues and epilogues, however, is focussed on setting the plays in the context of the devotion for Our Lady, and it is here that the speakers take on a very specific expository function. They outline the crucial role which Our Lady has as 'mediatrix' between God and sinful mankind, as opponent of the devil, and as the pivotal element in the salvation of mankind in her capacity as mother and bride of God. There is no overlap between the speakers of the prologues and epilogues with any of the characters in the actual plays, but the obscurity of their anonymity does not take anything away from the importance of their task.¹⁶ In

¹⁴ Initially, the plays were not performed by a Chamber of Rhetoric but possibly by a specially constituted group of performers linked to the Archers' Guild of Brussels, the Great Guild, who in the first instance took the initiative for the procession and the plays. In general, prologues and epilogues often make mention of the performing Chamber and/or of other Chambers invited to participate in competitions. In the case of the *Bliscapen*, the Brussels Chamber *De Corenbloeme* (The Cornflower) did get involved but probably not until well into the sixteenth century.

¹⁵ *Eerste bliscap en Sevenste bliscap*, ed. by Beuken, p. 54, lines 8–10. The princes in question are very likely Philip the Good and his son Charles the Bold, the latter with his betrothed, Catherine of Aragon. The status of the prologues and epilogues has been hotly debated, but it is likely that they date in essence from the same time and that they were very probably written for the first performance of I and VII in, respectively, 1441 and 1447. They may have been altered in the course of time. The manuscripts both date from c. 1455 and were still in use in 1559: these are notes and additions by the producer, identified as Franchoy van Ballaer, the *factor* of the Brussels Chamber of Rhetoric *De Corenbloeme*.

¹⁶ In cases where there are outer and inner plays there do not seem to exist any 'crossings over' of expositors or narrators or other characters from outer to inner play. The dramatic possibilities

the *Eerste bliscap* the opening scene shows Lucifer and 'Nijt' (Envy) plotting to destroy mankind; in the prologue this scene is prepared and set in context: the play will not show

Lucifers val mit sijne partijen,
Die hen bi hoverdien gesciet.

[Lucifers' Fall with all his cronies
which was caused by their pride.]

But the consequences for the devil and his supporters are outlined; the link with the Fall of Man is explained and the ultimate repair of the relationship between God and mankind foretold:

Dies bleven si ewelic int verdriet,
Int ewige demster, sonder verlaet;
Om een gepeyns waest sonder daet.
Maer want de viant met scalkere liste
Den mensche benijdde, om datti wiste
Dat hi ter gracen was vercoren,
Soe de hi hem Gods gebod verhoeren,
Dwelck Adam en alle sijn geslachte
Moeste besueren, totdat dit brachte
Dontfermicheit Gods tot enen vree.¹⁷

[Therefore forever, without respite,
into eternal darkness they were brought;
it was an act committed without thought.
The fiend envied mankind and was consumed
By evil cunning, because he assumed
That Man to God's grace was elected,

of the separate worlds of the outer play, presented as the 'real world', are endless. They are often used to strengthen contrasts, for example that between sceptics or disbelievers and those who try to dissuade them from their misguided actions or thoughts. The final outer play then provides the opportunity of showing how effectively the performance of the inner play converted the sceptics. That served a double purpose: to show the effectiveness of the Rhetoricians and their dramatic education and to demonstrate the power of the beliefs or morals acted out in the inner plays. See for instance *Een esbatement van sMenschen Sin en Verganckelijcke Schoonheit / A Moral Comedy of Man's Desire and Fleeting Beauty*, ed. and trans. by Elsa Strietman and Robert Potter (Leeds: University of Leeds, 1994).

¹⁷ *Eerste bliscap en Sevenste bliscap*, ed. by Beuken, p. 56, lines 50–61. The epilogue to I and the prologue and epilogue to VII show similar expository aspects of explanation, anticipation, elucidation, and repetition, all geared towards maximum clarity for the audience.

And caused God's command to be neglected,
With Adam and all his kin thus fated
To be punished, until peace was created
By God's Mercy.]

Larry E. West has outlined the many functional aspects of expositors in German Passion Plays.¹⁸ Even though the material from the Low Countries is very scant by comparison it is clear that narrating and expository figures were employed to ensure that the audience understood very clearly what they saw on stage and why they were shown it.

There are, for example, some not-quite-lowly characters which function, in part, as narrators and expositors.¹⁹ In *Die sevenste bliscap van onser vrouwen*, the play about the death and the assumption of Our Lady, there is a scene in which three neighbours in a street in Ephesus are listening, in a crowd, to St John preaching about the meaning of the sacrifice of Christ. At the end of St John's speech, a stage direction reads: *here will come two angels with a piece of cloth and wrap it around St John and the cloth will shine like a cloud. And so covered they will carry him to before Mary's door, or in another way, as is best.*²⁰ In the following scene the neighbours watch, and express their astonishment and wonder, as St John floats by on his cloud. They prophesy that this will be remembered in Ephesus for more than two hundred years. They speculate what it might mean, recall the sermon and its meaning, and praise St John's evident honesty and his capacity for conveying in simple words for simple people the miracle of the Redemption.

Their function is in part that of entertaining (their reactions on seeing the preacher floating away introduce an element of comedy) and of connecting the scene of St John's ministry at Ephesus to the scene in which he, like all the apostles, is with Mary when she dies. The neighbours cannot know that but, in repeating and recalling St John's words, they act as expositors, not only of the

¹⁸ Larry E. West, 'The Expositor in the German Passion Play of the Late Middle Ages', in *Atti del IV Colloquio della Società Internazionale pour l'Etude du Théâtre Médiéval, Viterbo 10–15 Luglio 1983*, ed. by M. Chiabo, F. Doglio, and M. Maymone (Viterbo: Centro Studi sul Teatro Medioevale e Rinascimentale, 1984), pp. 97–111.

¹⁹ See above: *minderemanstonelen*.

²⁰ *Eerste bliscap en Sevenste bliscap*, ed. by Beuken, p. 164: *Hier selen comen twee ingele met eenen cleede ende omslaen Sint Janne ende tcleet sal scinen als een wolke. Ende soe bedect selen sine voeren vor Marien dore, oft anderssins, soet best es.* The scene with the three neighbours follows on from this, preceded by an explanatory remark in the margin: *De ghene die saten te predecacien inde stat van Ephesen* (Those who were sitting [and listening] to the preaching in the city of Ephesus).

sermon at that moment but also of its significance for generations to come. The miracle of the Redemption is in this way again emphatically explained to the audience: St John, in a long monologue, already acted as expositor. The neighbours function as his audience, and in discussing and explaining to each other what they have heard they enact what (it is hoped that) the offstage audience should be doing and feeling.

Later in the play similar functions of entertaining, commenting, and analysing are given to a group of Jews trying to prevent Mary's funeral procession from reaching the Vale of Josaphat. That scene was to have linked up with another of 'neighbours', but only one line has been preserved and the rest of the quatern is lost.

These are examples of characters with multiple functions in which aspects of a narrator or expositor can be detected. They foreshadow the far more explicit and elaborate guides and expositors of the moralities and the scenes-apart of sinners, or of 'lowly characters'; they also point towards the more elaborate comic scenes in moralities, the later intermezzi in renaissance drama and of course in Shakespearean drama.

It is unfortunate that we have only two surviving cycle plays in the Low Countries, and any conclusions drawn from them with regard to narrators or expositors cannot be anything other than tentative. The *Bliscapen* do not make use of explicit expositors other than the prologues but use implicit, internal, methods to transmit their messages to the audience. These texts are much shorter than many of the French, German, and English cycles and were not performed on consecutive days. Peter Happé has shown how extensive the presence of Expositors and Prolocutors is in the great cycles performed over a number of days. It is tempting to conclude that, in the *Bliscapen* at least, such figures were not needed. It was not difficult for an audience to remain aware of the coherence of the various parts of the play. The narrative plots and the messages transmitted are relatively simple and follow closely upon each other.

The use of groups of expository figures, such as we saw with the neighbours in the *Sevenste bliscap*, argues a keen awareness on the part of the playwright about entertaining an audience whilst keeping the didactic momentum going and transmitting the desired message in the clearest possible manner. In that the *Bliscapen* do show many similarities with cycle plays from other areas.

Toogspelen

The use of the spoken word in conjunction with visual images, 'togen' or tableaux vivants, or painted pictures, was a standard device in Rhetoricians drama and it is possible to discern a particular genre, the 'toogspelen'. In some of these the words serve as a supporting and explaining frame for a series of images, and such plays were mainly produced as part of processions or in connection with them. Some were shown on a fixed stage; some were mobile, either on wagons or carried on foot or on horseback.²¹ Some times a 'toogspel' was part of an allegorical play, a *spel van sinne*. A common element was that they required expositors, allegorical figures which explained the significance of the visual image to the audience. In the context of a larger play, the explanations were directed to other characters on the stage as well as to the audience. The division of text and images varies, and expositors in toogspelen come in different guises and with varying degrees of importance in the totality of the plays.

A striking example can be found in one of the two Dutch *Pyramus and Thisbe* plays.²² The Haarlem *Piramus* is simple in structure with just four characters apart

²¹ An extensive and innovative discussion of *toogspelen* and the theological thought and didactic intentions behind them can be found in B. A. M. Ramakers, 'Horen en zien, lezen en beleven: Over toogspelen in opvoering en druk.', in *Spel in de verte: Tekst, structuur en opvoering-praktijk van het rederijkerstoneel*, ed. by B. A. M. Ramakers (Gent: De Fonteine, 1994), pp. 129–65; I have included some discussion of several plays with visual images and their expositors in 'Show and Tell: Entertainment and Persuasion Tactics in Louris Jansz. of Haarlem's *Vanden Afval van tgodtsalige weesen*', in *Mediaevalia* (forthcoming).

²² One of these was included in the collection of plays copied c. 1600 for the Haarlem Chamber of Rhetoric *De Pellicanisten* (The Pelicanists, i.e. those worshipping the Pelican), and manuscript text and transcription are available in *Trou Moet Blijcken, Boek 2: Deel B*, ed. by W. M. N. Hüsken, B. A. M. Ramakers, and F. A. M. Schaars (Assen: Quarto, 1992), fols 141^v–149^r with the title *Een spel van sinnen van de historie van Piramus en Thisbe genaempt de Sinnelijcke Gene-gentheijt* (An allegorical play of the history of Piramus and Thisbe called the Sensuous Affection); this short play (596 lines) is usually referred to as the Haarlem *Piramus* although it originated in the Southern Netherlands. The much longer *Pyramus ende Thisbe* (1531 lines) is thought to be an early work of the Flemish Rhetorician Matthijs de Castelein of c. 1518/19. There are several printed versions but the play is usually referred to as the 'Antwerp' *Pyramus* after an anonymous, undated, text published by the Antwerp printer Henrick Peeterssen of Middelburch, active 1536–49. The standard edition of both plays is *Piramus en Thisbe: Twee rederijkerspelen uit de zestiende eeuw*, ed. by G. A. van Es (Zwolle: Tjeenk Willink, 1965). A translation of both plays with the original text is included in *Mixing Profit and Pleasure: Six Dutch Plays*, trans. by Elsa Strietman and Peter Happé, forthcoming.

from Piramus and Thisbe: the sinnekens 'Sinnelijcke genegentheijt' (Sensuous Affection) and 'Hertelijcke Lust' (Passionate Lust), 'Damoureuse' (Amorous), a young lover, and 'Poetelijck Gheest' (Poetic Spirit), a learned doctor. The sinnekens offer themselves as helpers to the lovesick Damoureuse and try and stoke his passion whilst Poetelijck Gheest attempts to make him see that his emotions are foolish and frivolous. He proposes to cure Damoureuse of his lovesickness by showing him 'something poetic which Nazo described in the fourth book of the *Metamorphoses*', the tale of two lovers who were made miserable by 'sensuous affection' and 'passionate lust'.

There is a curious treble perspective here: the sinnekens recall the past in Babylon where they made Pyramus and Thisbe wretched. Their role in the present begins when Pyramus enters the stage and the sinnekens take part in the 'historie' again. Moreover, once Pyramus and Thisbe are set on the course which will inevitably lead to their ruin and death, the sinnekens decide to 'counterfeit' the lovers' tale 'just to make a farcical make-believe show' (lines 296–329). They do not get much further than dressing up Hertelijcke Lust a bit with a veil and maliciously and mockingly do some cooing and billing before Thisbe enters.

The three perspectives mean that foreboding is piled up for the spectators. Poetelijck Gheest's warning that the showing of the history of Pyramus and Thisbe will cure Damoureuse of his kind of love forever is substantiated first by the sinnekens' recollections of the misery they caused in the past and then by the enactment of the history. That is interrupted by the sinnekens' brief though cruel parody of the lovers. This farcical episode is another intimation that the lovers are doomed and a perverse confirmation that the love from which Poetelijck Gheest tried to steer Damoureuse away is indeed ill-fated.

The events take their course, and the sinnekens express their astonishment and horror, nimbly changing from participants and instigators to commentators and activators, in the latter role analysing what love does to people and expressing the emotions which the audience is supposed to experience. After they leave, intending to create havoc elsewhere, Damoureuse professes himself much affected, but not yet ready to give in: 'not all lovers', he says stubbornly, 'perish thus'. Poetelijck Gheest quotes Scripture at him: those who live by the flesh, shall perish in body and in soul; he claims that there is a better, higher love than this.²³ He then shows Damoureuse Christ hanging on the Cross, with Mary and John standing at the foot of it. The image is revealed for only a moment. Poetelijck Gheest comments:

²³ Romans 8. 13.

Verblijt u hier inne, ghij amoureux:
dits de moerbeiboom daer salicheijt vuijt groeijt;
dits de minne seer victorieus
die svijants macht heeft affgesnoeijt;
dits de minne waer alle minne vuijt vloeijt;
sonder dese minnen en es gheene:
ie ander minne soeckt, certeyn, hem moeijt
te vergeeffs, en brengt hem int geweene.²⁴

[Rejoice in this, you, Amorous:
this is the mulberry from which salvation grows;
this is the love that is victorious,
the love which killed the devil's power;
the love from which all love flows;
without this love, there is no love;
to seek another love is all in vain,
it brings weeping and no gain.]

Damoureuse begs to be shown it again and Poetelijck Gheest now moves fully into the role of Expositor, explaining in great detail how the history of Píramus and Thisbe should be interpreted. Every part of the story — the lovers themselves, the lion, the fountain, the mulberry, the blood of the lovers which colours the berries of the tree — signifies specific parts of the story of man's fall and God's love.

The audience at this point has the image (painting/tableau?) of the Crucifixion before it. In some of the toogspelen the significance of the actual image is explained. In others, as in this case, the image itself needs no explanation: its function is meant to be wholly affective. The audience is to be moved, not in the first place by pity for the Man on the Cross but by, as Damoureuse says, its loveliness: 'Dat was om sien boven maten gracieus!' (To see that was utterly lovely). That emphasis would seem to indicate that the emotion which Damoureuse experiences is that of being affected by grace, that is, by his realization that Christ's agony will be his (Damoureuse's) salvation and that he is indeed in need of salvation. To explain why he wants to be shown the image again, Damoureuse says:

O Poetelijck spirit, mijn vrient alleene
ick bidde u, wilt mij noch eens den moerboom togen:
hij docht mij int wesen so schoon, so reene
dat hij onversadelijck is is mijnen oogen.²⁵

²⁴ *Píramus en Thisbe*, ed. by van Es, lines 464–71.

²⁵ *Píramus en Thisbe*, ed. by van Es, lines 472–75.

[O Poetic spirit, my sole friend, I pray thee,
Do show me once more the mulberry tree:
For that tree seemed so gracious, so pure,
My need for it, I think, will always endure.]

It is not the mulberry tree which is shown; the stage direction says: *here he is shown Christ on the Cross with Mary and John standing at its foot*. A small shift has taken place: Poetelijck Gheest's explanation that this is the mulberry tree from which salvation grows means that Damoureuse does not see the scene of the torment of the Crucifixion but has transposed it into a metaphoric image, that of the beauty and purity of the tree. The image and the explanation have been transposed into a mental image, one that in Damoureuse elicits great emotion and the awareness of his need, the same as the playwright no doubt meant it to do for the audience.

The didactic strategies of the Expositor in this play are cumulative. First a series of comparisons are made. Piramus can be compared to Christ since he died for love of Thisbe. She can be compared to the beloved bride of the Canticles and also to mankind since she was beset by the fierce lion, who is like the devil with all his cunning tricks. Thisbe died because of the lion, just as mankind perished because of the devil. Comparison and interpretation are never far apart and sometimes progress into exegesis, as is the case with the analysis of the mulberry tree.²⁶ According to the poets, Poetelijck Gheest explains, the berries of the mulberry tree turned from white to red when they were sprinkled with the blood of the lovers. Thus mankind was initially unblemished, free of all corruption, but through Adam's sin sensuous affection was lodged in human nature. This sensuous affection is the 'origo peccatij', the cause that broke the perfection of mankind. Even though God's Passion redeemed mankind, he remains tainted with the blood of original sin.

From interpretation of the elements of the history Poetelijck Gheest turns to emotive preaching, and the effect on Damoureuse is gratifying: the blessed Christ, beyond praise, he realizes, may well be compared to Piramus, since love brought love amidst great suffering.²⁷

²⁶ *Piramus en Thisbe*, ed. by van Es, lines 500–13.

²⁷ The language of his speeches here becomes much more complex with the repetition of the keyword 'love' in different settings, and this continues until the end of the play. This is reminiscent of Bernardine bridal mysticism which had its own exponents in the Low Countries in, amongst others, Hadewijch (thirteenth century). These passages are also very similar to sermons in their careful exegesis and constant repetition of the moral implications of the instruction. Both the lyrical quality and the sermonic technique are prominent in the dialogue between Damoureuse and Poetelijck Gheest. The lover asks for further explanation because moralization, i.e.

The last clause of the Expositor gives him yet another dimension; that of the harbinger of God’s message of love for mankind. Even here, at the culmination of the play, details of what has been enacted on the stage are compared to the details of the story of the Passion. Pyramus, like the Lamb of God, came down to the bower in the forest, that is, the oppressed world, where he found the mulberry, the tree of the Cross. There he saw his love’s bloodied veil, that is, the erstwhile unsullied soul of mankind, now torn and smirched by the lioness, the beast from hell. This Piramus-Christ gave his own life and sprayed the mulberry with his blood. His bride of the Canticles, Mary, that is, the Church, when she found him there (she who had been given the news by Simeon) pierced the deepest parts of her heart.²⁸

exegesis, brings him ‘ease’. Poetelijck Gheest’s summing up of the miracle of the Redemption is full of the imagery of bridal mysticism. The details of the comparison are clever and painstaking: Christ descended from his glory to be like the least of men in order to have free access to his beloved, and he dwelled next to her and was able to communicate with her, as through a narrow crack, i.e. the fact that He had taken upon himself man’s mortal body.

De levendighe goods soo — verstaet den keest —
in lieffde, door lieffde, als lieffde, so doorstraelt is,
dat hij vuyt lieffden, als lieffde, nedergedaelt is,
vuyt sijn eijghgen glorie noyt vertorden is niet,
en is d’alderminste mensche geworden, siet,
omdat hij woude spreecken vrij ende clear
met sijn lieff, en is comen wonen bij haer
deur aen deur, so ghij hebt die wete reijn,
en heeftse aengesproocken door een splete kleijn:
dits door sijn menselijke lichaem vrij. (lines 523–32)
[The Son of God, incarnate — get the core —
is love itself; with love, through love, he’s radiant,
so that with love, as love, he did descend,
but his own glory was never left behind,
though he became like the least of mankind,
so that he then could speak, clear, free, well,
with his beloved, near whom he came to dwell,
yes, door to door — that knowledge you don’t lack —
and could address her through a narrow crack,
that is to say, his human form.]

(With thanks to Anke van Herk, University of Amsterdam, for the exegesis of this passage.)

See for further elucidation of the sermonic aspects of morality plays, Alan Hindley, “La prédication par personnages”? Expositor Figures in the *Moralités*’ in this volume.

²⁸ This is an extraordinarily dense passage. Christ’s and Piramus’s passion is explained. Thisbe is seen as the bride of the Canticles, as the Bride of Christ and as Mary, and therefore as

The layering of this short play is extraordinary, comparison upon comparison, metaphor upon metaphor, but inexorably moving towards the final goal: to move the audience in such a way that they will see and understand and rejoice in the sacrifice of the Son of God.

This is a 'toogspel' with an 'extension' to it. The Expositor has, as is frequently the case in such plays, the use of an extremely emotive image, and this is shown to the audience throughout his explanations. The difference is that the Expositor uses the emotive aspects of the image to refer to parts of the story enacted on stage and then explains their significance with relation to the Passion of Christ. As always in Rhetoricians plays, emotion and intellect are both called upon to reach the audience.

Campaigning for the 'Conste'.

In a *spel van sinne* which Cornelis van Ghistele wrote for the last *landjuweel*, the competition of Brabant Chambers in Antwerp in 1561, three positive members of the dramatis personae become joint expositors of a 'toog'.

There was much at stake for the Chambers in this elaborate and glittering occasion: the 1550s had been marred by increasing internal religious and political conflict in the Low Countries, while the wars with France had brought economic hardship. Relationships with the new king, Philip II of Spain, were increasingly difficult, and the opposition to many of his religious and political policies increased in strength. The Treaty of Cambrai of 1559, ending the war between Spain and France, seemed to bring new hope for a more prosperous time, and it was celebrated widely with prominent participation of the Rhetoricians.

Throughout the Antwerp festival the expectation of a new era can be perceived, a period in which trade and commerce could be expected to flower again and from which the art of the Rhetoricians might also benefit. It had been difficult to get permission from the authorities: they regarded the Rhetoricians with alarm and deep suspicion because of the political and religious dissent rife in the Chambers. The competition was allowed to go ahead, but many safeguards were

Ecclesia. Thisbe's grief on finding her beloved dead is compared to the suffering Mother of God beneath the Cross. The mention of 'Simeon who gave her the news' harks back to the scene of the Christ child in the temple (Luke 2. 25–35) where Simeon, having been promised that he will see the Messiah before he dies, prophesies to Mary that the child will 'be a fall and a resurrection for many in Israel and a sign which will elicit opposition. And a sword will cut through your own heart so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed' (Luke 2. 35).

put in place: no religious or political topics could form the subject of plays, poems, or processional activities, and every text had to be censored beforehand.²⁹ This may in part account for the topic chosen for the category of the allegorical plays, the *spelen van sinne*: what inspires mankind most to the arts, 'hetwelck den mensche aldermeest tot consten verweckt'? The answers were expected to centre on the relationships between the liberal *artes* and commerce. The merchant, a pivotal figure in Brabant's highly developed trading and manufacturing economy, could not prosper when trade routes were closed by war and commerce disrupted by battling or marauding armies. That in its turn was seen as detrimental to the arts and particularly to the art of rhetoric.

The humanist and Rhetorician Cornelis van Ghistele was the *factor* of the Antwerp Chamber, *De Goutbloeme* (The Marigolds), and as such had the task of writing something with which to open the dramatic presentations. His contributions consisted of a *Presentacie*, a *Prologhe*, a *spel van sinne*, and an *Epilogue*.³⁰

The *Presentacie* is a monologue by an anonymous speaker; it is a thanksgiving for the peace (concluded at Cambrai in 1559) which will mean an end to discord. The arts cannot flourish in times of war but will now come into their own again. The *Prologhe* is a dialogue between two female figures, Antwerpia and 'Eerlijcke

²⁹ G. Marnef, "Rederijkers en religieuze vernieuwing te Antwerpen in de tweede helft van de zestiende eeuw", in *Conformisten en rebellen: Rederijkerscultuur in de Nederlanden (1400–1650)*, ed. by Bart Ramakers (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2003), pp. 175–88 (p. 177), points out that religious issues were not entirely absent from the competition. Parallel with the official drama competition a contest of refrains was held and one surviving poem is written on the theme of 'when mankind will be liberated from sin', a question to which Protestants or Catholics would give very different answers.

³⁰ E. van Autenboer, *Het Brabants landjuweel der rederijkers (1515–1561)* (Middelburg: Uitgeverij Merlijn, 1981); *Uyt jonsten versaemt: Het landjuweel van 1561 te Antwerpen; catalogus tentoonstelling Brussel*, ed. by E. Cockx-Indestege and W. Waterschoot (Brussels: Koninklijke Bibliotheek Albert I, 1994). For Van Ghistele, see M. Vinck-van Caekenberghe, *Een onderzoek naar het leven, het werk en de literaire opvattingen van Cornelis van Ghistele (1510/11–1573), rederijker en humanist* (Gent: Koninklijke Academie voor Nederlandse Taal- en Letterkunde, 1996). This is an immensely learned and wide-ranging study which brings out the many connections between Rhetoricians and humanist learning. It suffers a bit from seeing the Rhetoricians as the forerunners for Dutch Golden Age drama of the seventeenth century, but that does not diminish its achievement. Van Ghistele's contributions to the Landjuweel are discussed on pp. 196–212 and 289–342. A translation of the *Presentacie*, *Prologhe*, and *Tspel van sinne* is available in Elsa Strietman, 'Cornelis van Ghistele's Defence of Rhetoric', in *Porci ante Margaritam: Essays in Honour of Meg Twyck*, ed. by Sarah Carpenter, Pamela King, and Peter Meredith, special issue, *Leeds Studies in English*, n.s., 32 (2001), 439–79.

Conste' (Honest Art), the latter a personification of the art of the Rhetoricians. Antwerpia is hailed as an outstanding patroness of the arts and of the art of rhetoric in particular. Discord and conflict are now ended and Antwerpia and the 'conste' will both benefit from this and regain their former glory. There is a strong emphasis on the civilizing effect of the art and its role in attaining virtue.

The *spel van sinne*, which does not have a specific title, concentrates on similar preoccupations: wealth can be used in an ethically sound manner and will then benefit the art of rhetoric, and the arts in general; they can only flourish in a peaceful and prosperous society. Van Ghistele has some difficulties with this line of argument: on the one hand he wishes to stress that art needs peace and prosperity (as has now been achieved in Antwerp and the Low Countries); on the other hand he wants to present art as an everlasting force for good, and as an assurance of immortal fame for its devotees. By contrast Fortune is fickle and earthly wealth does not necessarily last nor does it grant immortal fame.

The unscrupulous side of earthly riches is represented by the character 'Ghierich Herte' (Avaricious Heart). He tries to persuade Mankind to adopt his pragmatic and mercenary views. The voices of reason are represented by 'Verstandich Gheest' (Intelligent Spirit), 'Eerlijcke Fame' (Honourable Fame), and 'Redene' (Reason). They all urge Mankind not to trust in the fickleness of Fortune or in earthly riches, but to concentrate on promoting art and the arts.

Van Ghistele addresses the theme of the play (what inspires mankind most to the arts/artes?) by means of a picture which is explained to Mankind by Verstandich Gheest, Eerlijcke Fame, and Redene, who all become expositors.³¹ Eerlijcke

³¹ The antecedents of the picture printed in the edition of the plays published in 1562 by the Antwerp printer W. Silvius are very complex indeed. We do not of course know what was shown on the stage during the performance of the play or whether Silvius was given the version he prints by Van Ghistele. The picture derives from one in Andreas Alciatus's *Emblemata*, not from the first edition (Augsburg 1531) but from the Venice edition of 1546. There are many variants of this emblem and it is not clear how and where Van Ghistele found it: the one included in Silvius's edition is identical to that in the Venice edition. Its motto and subscription, included by Silvius in his edition, are not mentioned in the text, and it is not clear whether they would have been visible on the stage. They are pertinent to Van Ghistele's argument. The motto *Honos alit artes* (honour feeds the arts) sums up the significance of the allegorical character Eerlijcke Fame. The four Latin verses sum up Van Ghistele's perspective: art and science as personified by Mercury offer safety, unlike Fortuna, but more importantly, Mercury's gift of the arts offers mankind immortal fame. Mercury is of course not only the god of eloquence but also of trade. That aspect, though not part of the emblem or the subscription, is present in a variety of ways in the *spel* and in Van Ghistele's other contributions to the *landjuweel*, as it was indeed of the competition in its entirety: the role and importance of the merchant for a prosperous society and therefore for a

Fame promises Mankind that the origin of the arts will be shown 'figuerlijck', visually, so that Mankind will then be inspired to 'honest virtue'. A stage direction indicates that Fame pushes aside a curtain or other decor to reveal what Mankind describes as 'twee puncten' of which he cannot at all understand the significance. A 'poeetelijck punct' is usually a self-contained processional tableau, but here the term is used for a picture or *tableau* in a play on a fixed stage. What is puzzling is Mankind's remark that he can see two 'puncten', though Fame's response does not imply that there are two separate pictures or tableaux.³² Two of the figures in the picture are of prime importance and it may be that these are what Mankind refers to, namely Mercury and Fortune (Fig. 2). There are also two auxiliary figures, Experience and Labour, who holds a spade called Diligence, and they too are explained.³³ The three expositors give detailed descriptions of the picture, explain each figure and attribute, and provide insight into their significance.³⁴ In the rest

climate in which the arts could flourish. Van Ghistele's *Epilogue* is based upon the question: how useful/beneficial are those sturdy people, merchants who act with justice? Vinck-van Caekenberghe, *Een onderzoek*, pp. 203–04, analysed this play and the emblem and discussed its antecedents in classical, medieval, and humanist literature and in the visual emblematic art in great detail. She is, however, inclined to play down Van Ghistele's achievement as a boring and dry summary of encyclopaedic wisdom and the play as lacking in plot development and dramatic tension, with its sole enlivening moment the *toog*. I see it as a very efficacious piece of dramatic visual education.

³² The term *punct* for a tableau or picture derives from the word for the sledges or waggons on which such visual aids were usually transported and which in turn derives from Latin *ponto*, ferry or boat: B. A. M. Ramakers, *Spelen en figuren: Toneelkunst en processiecultuur in Oudenaarde in Middeleeuwen en Moderne Tijd* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1996), pp. 190, 193–95.

³³ W. Silvius, *Spelen van Sinne, Antwerpen 1561* (Antwerpen: M. W. Silvius, 1562), fols P 3^v and P 4^r; Strietman, 'Cornelis van Ghistele's Defence', p. 463, lines 388–407. These two lesser figures are very apt in the context of the Rhetoricians' consciousness about their art: Divine Inspiration is often quoted as the *prima causa* for the *conste*. Mankind expresses his joy at the efficacy of the visual explanation: a stone heart would thus be moved to love for the arts. Fame then states that: 'Ja, die God ghebruyckt heeft in tscheppens beghinnen | Door den Godlijcken gheest der natueren crachtich' (God made use of the arts in the beginning of the creation through the Holy Spirit and its powerful nature). From all we know, however, about the Chambers and their insistence on 'in-house training' for their members, diligent labour and seasoned experience were seen as necessary and honourable; cf. Arjan van Dixhoorn, *Lustige geesten: Rederijkers en hun kamers in het publieke leven in de Noordelijke Nederlanden in de vijftiende, zestiende en zeventiende eeuw* (Utrecht: A. van Dixhoorn, 2004), pp. 214–54.

³⁴ See for the crucial passages and a translation Appendix I. This translation is a modified version of one that appears in Strietman, 'Cornelis van Ghistele's Defence'.

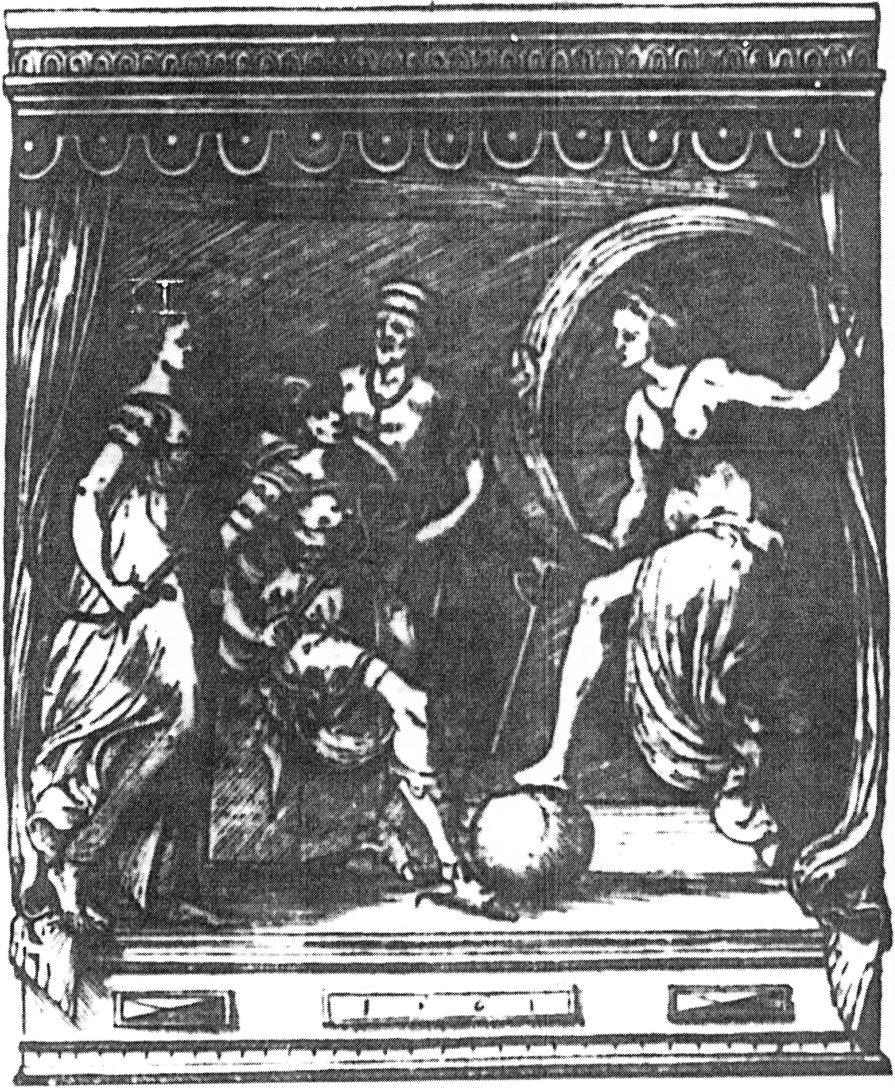


Figure 2. Mercury and Fortune with Experience and Labour. After a print by Andrea Alciatus in W. Silvius, *Spelen van Sinne*, Antwerpen 1561 (Antwerpen: M. W. Silvius, 1562). By permission of the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

of the play the three instructors sustain this function. They continue to teach Mankind about the origins of the arts and their links with the art of rhetoric, and he is not called upon to do anything else but agree, taking upon himself the 'role' of the audience. The three guides take it in turn to describe and explain without any particular links between their allegorical significance and the matters they explain. There is a sense of expediency here on the part of the playwright: gone is the slight dramatic tension which the figure of Ghierich Herte and then Mankind's ignorance with regard to the mysterious picture had brought. There is no debate between the instructors, they each have their say with a view to a common purpose.

This is a *modus operandi* typical of the drama of the Rhetoricians: the playwright needs to persuade his audience, and in this case he sets about it as if he is producing a learned treatise. Repetitions, rephrasings, additions, all are geared towards making the audience on stage (Mankind) and off stage (the spectators) understand and accept the thrust of the argument.

Speculation is tenuous and dangerous but one cannot help concluding that audiences must have accepted and welcomed this mode of entertainment and instruction. Many amongst them are likely to have been members of Rhetoricians Chambers themselves and been familiar with this procedure from other occasions and from the practice and instruction they were likely to have received in their Chamber meetings. Others may have watched and listened with partial understanding since they might not have heard of any of the sages and gods and topics that were mentioned. Yet it is tempting to think that the careful combination of showing, telling, repeating, and rephrasing might have reached them too. The multilayered message was that art is important, it is lastingly valuable, it brings immortal fame, peace and prosperity are needed to make it flourish optimally, greedy amassing of riches is wrong and useless, and fortune is fickle.

The educational programme underpinning this play, and all the Antwerp plays, poems, tableaux, and processions, shows that the Rhetoricians were aware of the learning and teaching methods of their time, that they were in touch with the learned culture of their time. They were clearly not afraid to put upon a stage an extremely complicated emblem and bombard their audience with a barrage of classical and medieval and contemporary information.

Narrating the Invisible

In Cornelis van Ghistele's two-part play *Van Eneas en Dido* a number of devices are used to supply the audience with information and to evoke an emotional response from the audience. As in many Rhetoricians plays the *sinnekens* fulfil a

number of functions: narrating, explaining, commenting, analysing. Mostly their dialogues are with each other in 'scenes apart'; sometimes they engage directly with the protagonists. In some cases they are on the stage by themselves; in others they speak from a position aside while the main characters are on stage. In the latter case there is, as it were, an invisible partition between the main action and the sinnekens. Van Ghistele also used a prologue play with two characters and, at the end of the second part, an epilogue play with three characters.

In the prologue 'Rhetorijckelijck Gheest' (Spirit of Rhetoric) and 'Poetelijck Sin' (Poetic Inspiration) explain, amongst other things, the choice of topic. Van Ghistele emphasizes the link between the great Roman Empire of which Aeneas was the founder and the equally great Empire of Charles V, who was, at the time, also the ruler of the Low Countries.³⁵ Van Ghistele uses Virgil's promise to Aeneas, 'I have given you an empire without end', as the context for his May play which will show the doomed love relationship between Aeneas and Dido.³⁶ Rhetorijckelijck Gheest and Poetelijck Sin combine the function of narrator and expositor: the audience is provided with the history of Aeneas and an explanation of its importance for the contemporary reality of their town (Antwerp), nation, and ruling dynasty as well as for the future.³⁷ In the course of the play, however, the dynastic concerns become less prominent and the love story, especially Dido's side of it, takes over.

Dido's tragic fate is used in the epilogue of the play as a warning to all young people not to engage in foolish love, and with that Van Ghistele fulfils his task of writing a May play in which love needs to be a central concern. The epilogue is an exposition of the significance of the play, carried out in typical Rhetoricians fashion with the characters on the stage 'acting' the audience. 'Ongheleerd begripen'

³⁵ The play was written in 1551 and performed in 1552, three years before Charles V abdicated the throne; that was in fact the end of the 'everlasting' Empire. Charles's son Philip II was overlord of the Netherlands and King of Spain while other branches of the Habsburg dynasty ruled over the eastern and southern possessions.

³⁶ Virgil, *Aeneid*, ed. by H. Ruston Fairclough, rev. by G. R. Goold (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), I, 278–79: 'his ego nec metas rerum nec tempora pono; imperium sine fine dedi'.

³⁷ Elsewhere I have discussed other aspects of the play and its historical significance: 'Van Eneas en Dido: Two Amorous Plays Performed in Antwerp, 1552', *European Medieval Drama*, 4 (2000), 109–26; 'Oude wijn in nieuwe zakken; klassieke thema's in rederijkersspelen, vooral met betrekking to Cornelis van Ghistele', in *Limae labor et mora: Opstellen voor Fokke Akkerman ter gelegenheid van zijn zeventigste verjaardag*, ed. by Zweder von Martels, Piet Steenbakkers, and Arjo Vanderjagt (Leende: Damon, 2000), pp. 83–93.

(Imperfect Understanding), a 'spectator', clambers onto the stage looking for his companion, 'Onweetend beschimpen' (Ignorant Criticism), who stands below the stage, presumably amidst the spectators. They want to join the actors of the *Gout-bloemen* notwithstanding the fact that they have been thrown out of the Chamber for incompetence, mockery, and clowning. They fall to discussing 'last Sunday's play', which was 'al groote swaerheijdt, Een baghijnen spelen enckel poetrye' (very heavy, nothing but cant and doggerel). Another 'member of the audience', 'staetelijck ghecleedt' (soberly dressed), severely takes them to task and, since they remain unrepentant, finally chases them off: Antwerp is no place for the likes of them; Paris is more likely to appreciate their sort. In the course of the discussion, the man soberly dressed conveys a detailed and thorough analysis of what the spectators have just seen on stage and thus becomes the chief expositor. The playwright juggles, skilfully and effectively, with the reality of the play and that of the spectators, with real time and imagined time, and with the expectations of and prejudices against Chambers of Rhetoric.

Within the two parts of the play the playwright resorts to other devices to get his message across. One of these is the reporting of something taking or having taken place off stage, a device well known from classical drama and much used in late sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Renaissance drama in the Low Countries but not much used on the Rhetoricians stage. There are two instances of this in *Van Eneas en Dido*: the hunt and the cave episode, and the departure of Aeneas from Troy.³⁸ It is not unusual for sinnekens to be the narrators of and commentators on love and lust scenes; often these take place on stage with the protagonists centre stage and the sinnekens on one side. In this instance the tale of the hunt and the cave is divided between the sinnekens and a guard on a tower of Carthage. Van Ghistele combined the centuries-old tradition of the dawn song, where the guard on the tower wakes the lovers because they must part, with a narrative in the form of an eyewitness account. The guard sings a song, a combination of a dawn and a May song, and then, in a speaking voice, relates the preparations of the court for the hunt, how he can see the queen and the 'knight of Troy' already on horseback. He has noticed how much the queen favours the foreign knight, but curbs his own speculations:

Ick sie secreteelijck meer dan ick mach craijeren
 Van Venus dieren, in huecken en hoolen,
 Maer hooren, sien en swijghen is mij bevoolen. (p. 195, lines 1221–23)

³⁸ Cornelis van Ghistele, 'Van Eneas en Dido', ed. by Iwema, pp. 194–99, lines 1168–1330, and 227–29, lines 2092–2151 (further references are to this edition); Virgil, *Aeneid*, IV, 120–79.

[Nobody knows that I see more than I reveal,
of Venus' creatures, of the places where they shelter,
but I'm constrained, I hear and see but I don't tell.]

The sinnekens, in the scene following the guard's, comment, in crude terms, on Dido's readiness 'to be plucked' and that all such cases end badly. 'Jonstich Herte' (Lustful Heart) is the chief narrator; he knows much more than 'Faeme van Eeren' (Honour's Fame) and, in the usual question-and-answer pattern of sinnekens scenes, all that happened 'yesterday' is revealed: the hunt, the thunderstorm, and the cave scene in salacious detail. Both of them analyse the effect this has had on Dido and on Carthage: Dido is completely irrational; she has stopped governing, and the building programme to make Carthage a stronghold has been abandoned. Aeneas has seemingly forgotten that he must journey to Italy; in short, there is total personal and communal disintegration: thus merciless love makes complete fools out of people.³⁹

The guard's reportage is largely factual but, if anything, sympathetic to Dido; the sinnekens are cruel and crude in their narrative and their analysis of the behaviour of the lovers is condemnatory. The message they convey to the audience is that foolish love alliances between individuals are damaging for them and for the community, a frequent theme in sixteenth-century Rhetoricians plays.

Sinnekenes are, by definition, untrustworthy, since they are seductive negative forces. Their role in both parts of *Van Eneas en Dido* differs from that in many other plays: here their chief function is not that of seduction but of reportage and analysis, of narrating and explaining. This also has the effect that they become less untrustworthy. They are malicious; they take immense satisfaction in the fact that Dido is clearly riding for a fall, but their assessment of the situation is correct. Love between these two partners was doomed from the start, and that Dido would be the victim was also obvious.

Van Ghistele's May play did explicitly aim to show its audience the immensely ancient and worthy antecedents of Charles V's Empire and how foolish love checked, even if for an instant, the inexorable progress of history. Elsewhere I have argued how Dido's story 'takes over' the imperial narrative and how the sinnekens' role is affected by that shifted perspective. It also meant that the narrative and expository aspects which were always part of their 'package' are much more prominent.

³⁹ Virgil, *Aeneid*, IV, 412: 'Improbe amor quid non mortalia pectora cogis?'

In the second part of the play this becomes even more apparent. In the scene of Aeneas's stealthy departure the guard on the tower sings a sad and admonitory dawn song, ending with:

Ghij die mit Venus banden
Ghebonden ligt seer vast,
Ghebruyckt doch u verstanden
Eer u druefheijdt verrast.

Ick mach wel vroolijck singen,
O Cupido prince groot;
Hue qualijck condij bedwingen
Des menschen herten bloot. (p. 227, lines 2092–2107)

[You who in Venus' fetters,
lie manacled so tight,
employ your mental powers
before grief starts to bite.

Though I may sing quite freely,
Oh Cupid, prince of might,
You do defeat maliciously
The human heart, so slight.]

This is followed by his startled awareness of a great fleet before Carthage and then the realization that this is not an enemy fleet but Aeneas setting sail. Again, the guard just reports this whilst the sinnekens, following immediately after, mockingly focus on the effect this will have on Dido and hint that she will die. Dido's suicide monologue follows and then, after a 'pausa' (with music? singing?), they continue their cruel commentary in which the focus moves from Dido's fate to that of Carthage and then to the young people in the audience. This is where they take on the explicit didactic role which is also part of their usual repertoire, and their malicious discourse gives way to a serious warning about the dangers and torments of love.

Conclusion

These are but a few instances of prompters, narrators, and expositors functioning in plays from the Low Countries. In the case of prompters further investigation of visual and verbal material might produce more evidence though implicit evidence in plays is not likely to be found. As far as financial accounts are concerned, Rhetoricians were amateurs and did not get paid for writing or acting, therefore a member who served as prompter would not be rewarded separately. Prizes were

given to playwrights, to actors, to clowns, and for performances and participation in processions; stage directors/prompters do not seem to be rewarded personally. The best sources still to be explored would be documents such as invitations to competitions and statutes of individual Chambers in which the duties and privileges of their members were laid down.

Expositors and narrators do not seem to operate as separate functionaries, nor, as may be deduced from the examples above, are they conceived by playwrights as separate and explicit presences. Anonymous prologue and epilogue speakers do exist but it is my contention that in the allegorical plays, *spelen van sinne*, prologues and epilogues frequently have opening or closing speeches by characters also functioning in the interaction and the illusory reality of the play. They can also be more elaborate affairs with two or more speakers in which a separate debate situation or a separate 'reality' from that in the play is set up. An example of such a 'debate situation' is that between Rhetorijckelijk Gheest and Poetelijck Sin in *Van Eneas en Dido*. An instance of a 'separate reality' is that of the three characters, Onweetend beschimpen, Ongheleerdt begrijpen, and 'De man staetelijck ghecleedt', who create a separate reality with two lapsed and disgraced actors and a member of the public.

Expositors within plays also, at least in the examples above, function implicitly in the totality of the interaction and often act as guides and instructors. Their specific appearance as expositors, explaining a *toog* and its wider significance as in the *Pyramus and Thisbe* play or an emblem as in Cornelis van Ghistele's *Antwerp* or a text and incident as in the *Sevenste bliscap*, is unemphatic. The examples of narrators I have given show that that is an even more fluid and integral part of a complex of functions, such as sinnekens have or figures appearing in *mindermanstonelen*, that is, the guard on the tower in *Van Eneas and Dido* or the neighbours in the *Sevenste bliscap*.

The question arises, whether plays from the Low Countries differ much in these respects from those in other countries. If it turns out that narrators and expositors in Rhetoricians drama function less often as explicit, separate dramatis personae and more frequently as part of the total interaction of the plays, and my contention is that that is likely, why would that be so?

The answer lies, in my view, in part in the dominance of allegorical drama, where most of the characters are in themselves, in their very names, programmatic bearers of packaged messages, of ready-made explanations. In their interaction with other, similar carriers of significance, they are self-explanatory to a high degree and there is little need for a separate expositor or narrator. After all, most of these allegorical figures are part of the totality of mankind's persona or his

consciousness of being part of the world of men and of a higher, divine reality. Most of the plays are, in their plots, voyages of discovery, where the confrontation with negative and positive aspects of being human takes place as interaction between characters. The device of the *sinnekens*, multifunctional as they are, also means that the need for separate expositors or narrators is small. The need for an expository figure arises when the message of a play is strengthened by visual means which require the audience to understand an extra layer of meaning, as in the emblem of the Antwerp 1561 play, or if a visual aid is presented which should not be taken only at face value, as in the *Piramus en Thisbe*. But even there, as already seen, such figures are not separate from the play.

It would seem then, from the limited material used in evidence here, that the plays of the Low Countries, of which the bulk can be counted as Rhetoricians drama, rely heavily on presenting a coherent reality on the stage, a reality held together by a plot and the interaction between characters. Each of these characters is the carrier of a part of the narrative and of the message of the play, and it is in their interaction that those are conveyed to the audience.

Appendix I

The Explanation of the Origin of the Arts in Cornelis van Ghistele's Defence of Rhetoric

LOFLIJCKE FAME*

Slacht dan den behenden,
 En wilt der redenen voetstappen volghen naer.
 Wildy ghebruycken de suyver conste eerbaer
 En haer oirboorlijcke gaven ghenieten.
 Maer eerst sal men u sonder verdrieten
 Der consten oorspronck ontdecken figuerlijck
 Opdat u herte mach heel beruerlijck
 Daer door verwect worden in duechden eerlijck.

(Hij schuyft)

DE MENSCHEN

Och ick sie hier nu twee puncten heerlijk,
 Maer den sin van dien can ick niet bevroeyen.

LOFLIJCKE FAME

Orsa, mensche, ick wil my gheerne moeyen
 Om sulcks te vercleerene, soo moechdy weten
 Wat conste is, siet, die daer is gheseten
 Op den viercanten steen, vast als een pilaer,
 Dat is mercurius in de plaetse voorwaer
 Van de edel conste vrijmoedich gheschepen,
 Want hy eerst verleent heeft en begrepen
 Der consten gaven, soo menighe tuyghen

REDENE

En dat is fortune die voor hem moet buyghen
 Wanckelbaer staende op eenen ronden cloot
 En teghen hare cracht tot alle stonden bloot
 Is Mercurius ghestelt, want als sy faelgeert
 En door haer wanckelbaerheyt wort verneert,
 Soo versoecktse aen hem eenighe hulpe, want
 Der consten ghebruyck is seker en valiant
 En der fortuynen ghewin ongheduerich is;
 Die sij heden blij maeckt, morghen treurich is
 Die sy haest groot maeckt, dickwils weer saen vercleent

En ghenen rijckdom en gheeft, maer naectelijck leent
Dat sy heden waer meent, is morghen gheloghen.

LOFLIJCKE FAME

En die dan eylaes worden bedroghen
Door der fortune snelle accidenten,
Als brant, ongheval, oft der siekten tormenten,
Of door coome[n]scap tsij te water, te lande.
De conste lieflijck en als de goederhande
En sal den sulcken haer gaven niet ontsegghen.

MENSCHEN

O loflijkfame wilt my doch uitlegghen
Waerom heeft Mercurius, die conste voorstaet,
Sulcken roede inde hant, met een vroom ghelaet,
Daer twee slanghen aen ghecnoopt sijn, vreemt om siene?

LOFLIJCKE FAME

Ick sal my verneren noch om dat te bediene:
De roede hy altoos in teecken des vreds draecht
En de twee slanghen daer aen ghecnoopt onversaecht
Deen een manneken, dander een wijfken soet;
Dit beteekent dat sijn redene vroet
Met woorden moet van discreetien soo sterck
Doorbonden sijn, dat noch leek noch clerck
Die en can weerlegghen oft contrarieren.

DE MENSCHEN

Maer wat personen hem adhereren
En soo adiunct staen als de ghetrouwe,
Deene een man, dander een vrouwe?
My lust wel te weeten hier af dintentie.

VERSTANDICH GHEEST

De vrouwe die heet experientie**
En de man, siet, die is arbeydt ghenaeemt:
Hebbende een spade, alsoot betaemt,
Die neersticheyt en door hulpe van desen
Heeft Mercurius alle consten ghepresen,
Vonden*** begrepen en ghebracht te voorschijne
Dus sy hem wel adiunct behooren te sijne

Want eenen ghetrouwen dienst sy hem ghedaen
Tot elcker tijt hebben.

LOFLIJCKE FAME

Hierom is mijn vermaen
Datmen gheen conste en can vercrijghen
Sonder neerstighen arbeyt; niet oock verswijghen
En moet ick experientie die veel vermach.

DE MENSCHEN

Mijn herte verblijft door al dit ghewach
En door dusdanich aenschouwen figuerlijck;
Een steenen herte sou wel worden beruerlick
Totter consten en die moeten beminnen.

[HONOURABLE FAME

Be clever, try to meet
Reason and dog his footsteps in pursuit;
Then you can use pure, honest art for good,
Her decent gifts will bring you joyous gain.
But first I must, without causing you pain,
Unveil the origins of the arts with a visual explanation,
So that your heart feels great elation *(He shoves aside [the curtain])*
And you' ll desire to live in virtue honestly.

MANKIND

Oh, here are two lovely images I see,
But what does it mean? I haven't a clue.

HONOURABLE FAME

Now, Mankind, I'm happy to help you construe
Its significance and to help clarify
What art is. Look, seated there on high,
On that sturdy pillar, that square stone,
That is Mercury, placed as on the throne
Of noble art, written in free expression,
For he first held arts' gifts in his possession
And lent them to us, as many witnesses agree.

REASON

Look, there is Fortune who must bend her knee,
Standing on a round globe, in precarious balance,

And as a counterweight against her force
Is Mercury, ready, at all hours; if she should fall,
brought down by her unstable poise upon that ball,
she'll try and get his help: he's constant,
for the nature of art is valiant and reliant,
while Fortune's promises are 'easy come and easy go',
whom she makes glad today, tomorrow feels very low;
she holds out greatness as often as she makes it disappear.
She doesn't give riches but, blatantly, only loans; Here,
Today, are the truths she offers: they are tomorrow's lies.

HONOURABLE FAME

It's easy to be deceived; Fortune's ties
Consist of sudden cruel accidents,
Like fire, mishaps, illness's torments,
Trading disasters, be they on water or on land.
But lovely art gives with a generous hand,
No creature would be denied her bounty.

MANKIND

Honourable Fame, can you explain to me:
Why does Mercury who fosters art's progression,
Hold that rod, with such a brave expression,
with two knotted snakes? What a curious sight!

HONOURABLE FAME

I'll do my best to clarify, to shed some light:
It's a sign of peace, that rod he grasps
And the two fearless writhing asps
— One a sweet female, the other is a male —
signify that his wise reason must not fail
to avail itself of arguments worded in such a way
that neither clerk nor layman can gainsay
their great wisdom, nor contradict by right.

MANKIND

And who are those people standing on the side,
As if they're there to help, as faithful as they can?
One is a woman, the other is a man;
I'd like to know: what's their significance?

INTELLIGENT SPIRIT

The lady's name is given as Experience,
 The man, depicted as Mercury's neighbour,
 Holds a spade called Diligence — his name is Labour —
 So it is a fitting tool. Their help is stable:
 Without it Mercury would not have been able
 To bring the blessed arts to light.
 It's fitting they should stand by his side,
 For they gave loyal service without intermission,
 For centuries.

HONOURABLE FAME

I make a strong submission:
 No art can be mastered with any success
 Without diligent Labour, and I must stress:
 Experience also plays an essential part.

MANKIND

This explanation has gladdened my heart;
 I'm happy now I understand this depiction;
 A heart of stone would surely feel emotion
 And warm to art and all her lovers too.]

* Punctuation added, proper names capitalized, spelling u/v w/uu regulated by me, ES.

** Misprint: should be 'experientie'.

*** Printed letters blurred and meaning of 'vonden begrepen' obscure.

EXPOSITOR FIGURES IN SOME CYCLE PLAYS IN FRENCH AND GERMAN

Peter Happé

Given that there was an extensive development of cycle plays in France and German-speaking areas in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, it is perhaps not surprising to find that there are some similarities in the use made of Expositor figures in the drama of both cultures.¹ The following discussion of characteristics of these figures will reveal some similar thinking about them: but they will also show some differences and these may be seen as reflecting contrasts in the ways in which cycle plays were conceived and performed in the different localities. My chief interest in discussing these is to try to establish what were the advantages to be found in the use of such figures. This will involve some consideration of the dates of performance, not always a simple matter, as well as some brief attention to the nature of the surviving texts, for it is apparent that the development and dissemination of texts is a critical feature in assessing what has come down to us. The account which follows must necessarily be selective, but it may be seen that some clear traits for comparison do appear and also that the treatment of text in France differed significantly from the way it was managed in the German-speaking areas.

To begin with I would like to suggest that the main functions of the Prologues and other Prolocutors have several purposes. Their stance outside the action of the drama gives them a special vantage point, and there is usually a sense that from this vantage they look within the action. This has three general preoccupations: they manage the narrative by summary, recollection, and anticipation, especially in plays where the performance was given over a number of days; they initiate

¹ See my *Cyclic Form and the English Mystery Plays* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2004). I should like to thank Elsa Strietman for her generous help in the preparation of this essay.

moments of participation by the audience in acts of devotion; and they offer a didactic interpretation of the action, either before or after. This last function is perhaps the one most open to variation because the intellectual approach to the material is very much a matter of the interest of individual authors, and it was ideologically determined. My chief conclusion is that within these broad preoccupations the Expositor figures are an effective means of elaborating and diversifying approaches to the narrative material. They constitute ways of increasing layers of perception. It will also be seen that there appears to be a distinct difference between the French and German cycles in respect of devotion because the processional and musical elements in the latter are noticeably greater and the connection between these and the enacted and spoken text is more complex.

Within these preoccupations it can also be seen that there are times when the Expositors' position outside the drama enables them to regulate pace and expression. In this respect their metatheatrical function is more pronounced. They remind the spectators that they are watching something artificial and something subject to contrivance and management. This perception is important because it manipulates time, making the historic, substantially biblical past, a history in effect, bear upon the consciousness of the watchers today in respect of chronology, bringing the past and the present into relation with one another and relating them to eschatological perspectives. It can also be seen that separateness in tension with the simultaneity of past and present is likely to have been of great benefit to the didactic and devotional objectives.

I

Consideration of some French versions begins with the *Passion d'Arras*, which has been commonly attributed to Eustache Mercadé, who died in 1440.² This large-

² The case for the attribution was discussed in *Le Mystère de la Passion: Texte du manuscrit 697 de la Bibliothèque d'Arras*, ed. by Jules-Marie Richard (Arras: Société du Pas-de-Calais, 1891; repr. Geneva: Droz, 1976), pp. vi–xi. References are to this edition and the translations are my own. See also Jean-Pierre Bordier, *Le jeu de la Passion: le message chrétien et le théâtre français (XIII^e–XVI^e s.)* (Paris: Champion, 1998), pp. 41–42, who discusses Mercadé's innovations in the genre of large-scale plays. Though there were Passion plays before Mercadé's, it does not seem that there were any on the same scale. Cf. the consideration of the work of the Confrérie de la Passion, indicating that they performed Passions on a smaller scale in 1380, 1381, and 1395 in Paris, by Graham A. Runnalls, 'La Confrérie de la Passion et les Mystères: Recueil de Documents relatifs à l'Histoire de la Confrérie de la Passion depuis la fin du XIV^e jusqu'au milieu du XVI^e siècle', *Romania*, 122 (2004), 135–201 (pp. 140–41, 178, and 180).

scale Passion is the earliest extant example of its kind and it may well have been influential in establishing the genre, especially in terms of production over several days. It concentrates on the Passion, beginning with the Debate of the Four Daughters of God, or *Procès de Paradis*, which sets up the need for the Incarnation and Redemption. The first of the four days covers the Annunciation up to Christ's encounter with the Doctors in the Temple. The following three days cover the Baptist's sermon to the suicide of Judas; the Trial of Christ to the Deposition; and the Resurrection to Pentecost, followed by the rejoicing of the Four Daughters. It will be noted that there is no representation of the Fall of Man and other Old Testament episodes, nor is there treatment of the life and death of the Virgin, or Judgement Day.

Amongst all his innovations Mercadé's extensive use of a framing speaker is one of the most significant. There is no doubt that he saw this figure, whom he calls *Le Prescheur*, as a means of expressing theological ideas, and as a voice which could be used in the practical manipulation of the narrative and the dramatization. He appears seven times: at the beginning and the end of each of the four days, except for the second day which begins with a sermon by John the Baptist on the theme of penitence (line 6425). He does not intervene within each day, and this seems to have been a practice generally followed by Mercadé's successors. In his first appearance he describes God's love ('*charité*', line 13) towards man and he raises the idea of the *mistère* of the virgin birth (lines 23–26):

La Trinité [...]
 Envoya Dieu le filz en terre
 Ou il fist ung moult bel mistere,
 Car ou ventre d'une pucelle
 Vierge plaisant, courtoise et belle,
 Volt venir sa grant deité
 A nostre povre humanité. (lines 18–27)

[The Trinity [...] sent God the Son to earth, where he brought about a fine mystery because he wished his great divinity to come into the womb of a maid, a virgin pleasing, well disposed and beautiful, so as to reach our poor humanity.]

He sets up a major theme for the whole play in his sermon on *A summo celo egressio ejus* ([Christ's] coming down from highest heaven, line 49), and explains that the whole play will be founded on this theme (lines 69–70). And so he makes it, for he reappears at the end of the fourth day with the same theme, but now he completes it by showing that Christ has now returned to the highest place (lines 24878–92). He adds that in this '*Humanité glorifiée | Est en luy et déifiée*' (In him human kind is glorified and it is also deified, lines 24893–94). This sense that the *Prescheur* has an overall function is enhanced by his repeated references to the

play itself, which he calls 'no jeu' (line 34). At the end of the first day he urges the audience to come again early on the next day, and he also comments on the play in a way which probably became conventional by excusing its length:

Et nous pardonnez humblement
 Se nous vous tenons longuement,
 Car le matier le requiert
 Qui a no jeu set et affiert. (lines 6407–10)

[And pardon us humbly if we keep you a long time, for the subject matter which supports and belongs to our play demands it.]

He also begs indulgence for any weakness 'En juant ou en prononçant' (In playing or in speaking, line 6417).

He elaborates the didactic and theological aspect of his function by two further sermons. At the beginning of the third day, which encompasses the crucifixion, he preaches on *Circumdederunt me gemitus mortis, Dolores inferni circumdederunt me* ('The groans of death have surrounded me, the lamentations of hell have surrounded me, line 13242). Before the action begins on the fourth day he anticipates the Resurrection by preaching on the theme *Surrexit Dominus vere* ('The Lord, in truth, has arisen, line 18568), dwelling on an exegesis of each of these three Latin words individually.

Mercadé's authorship of *La Vengeance JesuChrist* is not doubted as his name appears on the manuscript. It shows him making further use of Expositor figures: in this case Le Prescheur and Le Meneur du Jeu divide the functions between them. Le Prescheur is the principal spiritual figure, drawing attention to thematic material such as the cruelty shown to Christ and the necessity of divine punishment for those who had failed to acknowledge Christ and the crucifixion (lines 100–16). However he also has a part to play in the pacing of the cycle and the unfolding of events, mentioning the importance of it not being too long and also applying the fate of the Jews, as objects of divine wrath, to the risks being taken in contemporary France. On the other hand Le Meneur du Jeu is used more than once to bring in historical detail surrounding the action, and also to explicate the scriptural and patristic authorities upon which the narratives are based. This is perhaps surprising since his name suggests rather the managing of events upon the stage, but the need to authenticate the interpretation of the narrative is certainly visible elsewhere.³

³ See Stephen K. Wright, *The Vengeance of Our Lord: Medieval Dramatisation of the Destruction of Jerusalem* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1989), pp. 161–85.

Though Mercadé had in these ways set out some ways of framing a large-scale Passion, the work of Arnoul Gréban (c. 1450) followed by Jean Michel (1586) became rather more influential because it was carried on, sometimes verbatim, into other plays and localities in various ways once it had been created. Between them these two dramatists appear to have been the most influential of the Passion dramatists, though we should note that, in spite of the many adaptations of their work known today, there were other groups which were independent of them, as in the plays of the Auvergne and Burgundy. But though the respective Passions of these two dramatists were intimately related, we shall see that their policy regarding the framing of their work by means of a Prolocutor figure — in both cases called a Prologue even though the character speaks afterwards as well as before — is radically different.

The state of the surviving texts of these two Passions presents dissimilar features. Gréban's four-day version does not seem to have been printed as a whole, though parts of it were incorporated into some of the composite Passions which were created after it and subsequently printed. Its main survivals are a complex series of manuscripts, and the two modern editions have differed about which manuscript to follow.⁴ At the beginning there is a difference in the placing of the sermon on the subject *Veni ad liberandum nos*, | *Domine deus virtutum* (Come to liberate us, O Lord God of Virtues).⁵ But this is probably not of great significance as the wording is substantially the same in both printed editions. Both texts have the Prologue speak at the beginning and end of each of the four days. In Paris and Raynaud the Prologue goes straight into the sermon, which initially points to the Incarnation and God's submission, in human form, to pain and death because of the sin of the first man. The effect of this was to put all humans into hell, and it is explained that it was the patriarchs who called for God to come and release them in the words which are the theme of the sermon. The Prologue makes it clear that the purpose of the 'mistere' is to show how the Passion and the

⁴ *Le Mystère de la Passion d'Arnould Greban*, ed. by Gaston Paris and Gaston Raynaud (Paris: F. Viewig, 1878); and *Arnoul Gréban: Le Mystère de la Passion*, ed. by Omer Jodogne, 2 vols (Brussels: Palais des Académies, 1965–83). (I have used Jodogne here except where stated.) Nine manuscripts are extant, but there may have been more. As there are more than thirty-four thousand lines in the text, this argues a very large undertaking by the scribes involved.

⁵ As regards the Prologues the manuscript followed by Jodogne moves this from its position as a general introduction to the whole Passion, as it is in the manuscript followed by Paris and Raynaud, into the beginning of the first day, after the preliminary speech which begins the action of that day.

accompanying grief were undertaken by God's kindness ('douceur', line 108). This will be done by means of characters ('personnages'), and indulgence is asked for if too much is said, or if there are faults in the language:

Se la reverance de vous
 faulte y voit dessus ou dessoubz,
 trop dit ou faulte de langages,
 Soiez amiables et doux
 et nous corriger sans courroux:
 n'en serons auttrefois plus sages. (Paris and Raynaud, lines 117–22)

[If your reverence sees any fault above or below, too much said, or mistakes of language, be kind and gentle and correct us without anger, otherwise we shall not become the wiser.]

The first part of the speech ends with a request for the help of the Virgin and an *Ave Maria*. The Prologue then proceeds to outline the events of the first day, including the appeal by the patriarchs, the debate of the Four Daughters of God about what should be done about the wickedness and guilt of mankind, and the subsequent mission of Gabriel for the Annunciation. Since this part of the prologue does become concerned with the events of the first day, Jodogne's decision to use a manuscript containing this within the first day itself seems justifiable. In the copy text he uses, the Passion has a prologue consisting of a brief address to the audience, beginning with the words 'Ouvrez vos yeulx et regardez' (Open your eyes and look), drawing attention to the two 'misteres' of the Creation and the Passion. These, it is explained, will be shown 'grosseement et figuraument' (broadly/ completely and figuratively, line 24).⁶ This is followed by a speech by Dieu le Pere which dwells upon his eternal glory and describes how he will create the world including the four elements and the orders of angels. Once this is complete, the text moves on to the prologue of the first day with the sermon as noted above.

In spite of these differences in sequencing the sentiments of these first passages are closely similar. They contain some information about what is to come in the action of the play. They outline the importance of the 'mistere' of the Creation and the Passion, and they draw the audience into the coming action by calling for silence and by asking indulgence for possible faults. The key idea seems to be that the necessity of the incarnation needs to be established, and how this was done is the substance of the action in the first of the four days. Once the action of the first

⁶ Paris and Raynaud's chosen text has this passage after the introductory sermon. They print a note (p. 2) from their manuscript which indicates that in playing the Passion the 'creacion abregee' (short creation, line 250) could be left out.

day is completed, the Prologue reappears to give the Prologue Finable (lines 9905–43). This draws attention once more to the Saviour's 'charité et grant faveur' in becoming human. There follows a brief catalogue of events that have been shown including the circumcision, the presentation in the temple, the massacre of the innocents, the flight into Egypt, and the dispute with the Doctors in the temple. Finally the audience is invited to return tomorrow.

For his speeches on the three following days Gréban's Prologue carries out two main functions. These are to maintain a relationship with the audience, urging attention and offering excuse for poor expression or excessive length. But more importantly his speeches keep focussing attention on phases of the narrative, and in doing this he furthers the cyclic nature of the play as a whole, recalling and anticipating events in a manner characteristic of the genre. Thus at the beginning of the second day, in spite of apologising for prolixity (line 9954), the Prologue spends forty lines (lines 9952–91) recalling the events he had mentioned on the previous evening, this time with more descriptive detail and heightened feeling. Then he introduces John the Baptist and indicates, very briefly, that there will now be shown the events of the Passion up to the Resurrection.

The opening speech of the Baptist takes the form of a sermon in which he repeatedly addresses the people by name (lines 10011, 10118, 10144; also '*Venez*' line 10166) on the urgency of penitence. He draws particularly upon the prophet Isaiah. It seems likely that this speech is addressed not only to a stage audience, but also to the people who make up the audience in the whole auditorium. At the end, however, with '*Venez*' he specifically invites the stage audience to come and be baptized (lines 10166–67). This procedure of addressing two audiences simultaneously is symptomatic of the advantages of using Expository figures.

In fact the events of the second day do not get as far as the Resurrection: the Prologue Finable indicates that there will be a break after the interrogation by Annas, and that tomorrow the story will move on to the Resurrection. The third day begins with an *Ave Maria* and an emphasis in the prologue upon transitory earthly pleasures and the great love of the Saviour. Once again he notes that the audience will see the event enacted before their eyes by characters ('*parsonnaiges*', line 19956). He then recalls the events of the second day in a speech of more than one hundred lines, once again with emotional detail: he notes, for example, that Christ on the Mount of Olives shows '*la doubte et terrible crainte | qu'il avoit en son cuer empreinte*' (The doubt and terrible fear which he had taken in his heart, lines 20048–49). The Prologue Finable at the end of the third day praises the audience for their prudence and for listening without disturbance to the day's events, especially concerned, as it was, with the patience exhibited by Christ

during his suffering. The Passion, he says, is now over, but on Sunday the Resurrection will be shown.⁷

The fourth and last day is given a subtitle which draws attention to the 'Misterium Resurrectionis', and the Prologue has an extensive speech of 180 lines (lines 27300–27479). It begins with an act of devotion to the Virgin and the *Ave Maria*. The Prologue then introduces a theme which is treated in a sermon-like way in the speech that follows: *Exsurrexi et adhuc sum tecum* (I have risen and hence I am always with you: before line 27300, before line 27312, and within lines 27433–35). The benefit of these words is noted, and they are linked with a prophesy by David. The Prologue then turns to a summary of what has already been shown, recalling the events of the Passion up to the Entombment. At this point, however, there is a change in the presentation, for the Prologue next speaks the words of Christ to the people. Introducing the passage with the word 'semblablement' (line 27416: as though Christ *might have said* the words), it is an act of impersonation by the Prologue and one which, by its very indirectness, brings Christ before the audience. The process is made more direct by the mode of address adopted by the Prologue in speaking as though he were Christ:

Mon peuple, j'ay pour toy souffert,
pour toy me suis en croix ouffert,
pour toy ay la mort enduree,
mon ame du corps separee,
mon costé persé et fendu. (lines 27418–22)

[My people, I have suffered for you, for you I offered myself on the cross, for you have I endured death, my soul separated from my body, my side pierced and sundered.]

The climax of this speech is the promise to be with the people always, following the main theme, and this is presented as a promise. Although he is near the throne of the Father, his grace will be with them to conduct them to his everlasting kingdom. The Prologue then speaks in his own voice asking for God's help in the presentation to come. The action begins with the soldiers at the tomb.

The Prologue Final et Total (lines 34403–28) ends with an apology for faults and asks for the kind corrections of the audience or those who may know how to

⁷ The Resurrection came to have a separate existence as a separate dramatic form. Gréban's fourth day was printed separately, nine editions being known today: see Graham A. Runnalls, *Les Mystères français imprimés* (Paris: Champion, 1999), no. 18, pp. 150–53. There was also a version performed at Angers, falsely attributed to Jean Michel: see *Le Mystère de la Résurrection: Angers (1456)*, ed. by P. Servet, 2 vols (Geneva: Droz, 1993).

do things better, an apology which recalls that noted in Mercadé. The speaker expresses concerns that they have followed the way of the true faith:

Nous contendons, checun en soy,
 tenir chemin de vraye foy
 sans y riens changer ne muer
 qui puist au contraire argüer
 ne faire a la foy vitupere. (lines 34420–24)

[We try, each one of us, to keep to the way of true faith without changing or altering anything in it which could argue against it or bring any blame upon the faith.]

To end the ‘mistere’ joyfully, he invites the audience to join the singing of the *Te deum*. From this discussion it is clear that Gréban saw a necessity, or indeed an advantage, in having the whole of his play framed by the words of the Prologue.

Jean Michel’s *Passion* owes much to Gréban’s.⁸ It has many lines in common and his basic design was to expand the second and third days of his predecessor into four days of his own. Thus his narrative was essentially the *Passion* itself, without the preliminary episodes found in Gréban’s version and without the Resurrection (Michel’s narrative ends with the sealing of the tomb). The method used by Michel for framing this presentation of the *Passion* is in marked contrast to the detailed and comprehensive participation by Gréban’s Prologue. In Michel’s presentation of the events in common the framing devices are much more restrained. Indeed there is no intervention by such figures as Gréban’s Prologue at the beginning and end of each of the days, except at the start and the finish of the whole cycle. On the other hand there is an extensive sermon, entitled ‘Prologue Capital’, at the beginning on the theme of *Verbum caro factum est*. In this, each of these four words is the subject of elaborate exegetical treatment (lines 1–888). As Charles Mazouer has suggested, the sermon comprises three separate treatises on the Trinity, the redemption, and the eternal nature of the divinity.⁹ As in Gréban, there is an emphasis upon the descent of Christ into human flesh. Indeed that is precisely the point of the words upon which the initial sermon is based. But the treatment of this phrase in the prologue is very much in terms of theological exposition, the speech being divided into chapters in the early printed versions. This may raise doubts about whether this prologue was actually part of a performance. There is no attempt to recognize the presence of the audience and to draw them into the experience which the dramatization embodies. One brief

⁸ The standard edition is *Le Mystère de la Passion de Jean Michel*, ed. by Omer Jodogne (Gembloux: Duculot, 1959). References are to this edition.

⁹ *Le théâtre français du moyen âge* (Paris: Sedes, 1998), p. 151.

quotation from near the end of the sermon, which has demonstrated so many truths, may conveniently illustrate the prevailing mode:

Ainsi devons fermement croire
Que Dieu demeure tel qu'il est,
En tous temps et ou il luy plest,
Sans quelque limitation. (lines 836–39)

[Thus we must firmly believe that God remains just as he is at all times and where it pleases him without any limitation.]

The beginning of the first day simply has a heading saying that the play has corrections by the 'tres eloquent et scientifique Docteur Maistre Jehan Michel' and recording that it was performed at Angers in 1486. The fact that this is noted here and not before the Prologue Capital may be a further indication that the latter was not part of a performance. At the end of the day, at the point where the body of the Baptist is taken away for burial, the last speech is given by Abÿas, one of his disciples. He does not address the audience directly, but he speaks in general terms about the need to fear God, and he repeatedly uses first-person plural imperatives which seem to embrace all his listeners: 'Soyons doncques imitateurs | du bon Jehan' (Let us therefore be imitators of good St John, lines 7914–15). The speech ends with 'Amen'.

Michel's second day has no Prologue but there is a note at the beginning which is of interest because it offers alternatives. It says that to begin with the Apostles make a recapitulation of the deeds of Jesus on the first day, and indeed their speeches follow the note. However, it adds that the Woman of Canaan could begin ('pourra commencer') the day, speaking like one possessed as soon as a good silence had been established. Michel's text subsequently became the basis for many other Passions, and this feature may well be a reflection of it. This suggests that whoever prepared the copy for printing, whether it was Michel or not, must have been aware of the retrospective practice used by Gréban, and also that someone, possibly Michel himself, questioned its necessity or desirability.

The second day ends with a rather symbolic procession having a strong dramatic impact. Jesus rides off on the ass, preceded by four Apostles and followed by the rest. But the ass is led by Judas. St Andrew's last speech makes no reference to the audience. The third day resumes with the procession as Jesus reaches the 'parc' and the Jews are to arrange themselves in front of him carrying the palms. As soon as a good silence is established, children are to sing melodiously, and the head note adds 'en lieu de prologue'. It looks as though this processional element was a feature of the transition from one day to another. In practical terms it may well have been that the actors were meant to come into the acting space and that their arrival brought about attentive silence. The third day ends with Annas and

Maucorant going off towards the house of Pilate where Jesus is being held. The fourth day then begins with Christ being led by the tyrants and the other clerics with the Jews following. Then Judas begins the action with his self-condemnation (line 22867). Other than the notes explaining these movements, there is no attention to the significance of the performance or to the management of the audience.

The action of the fourth day and of the whole play ends with the sealing of the tomb. The Prologue Final could hardly be more brief. It comprises only seven lines:

Puis qu'avons eu temps et espace
de reduyre en bref par escript
la passion de Jesucrist
ayons en recordacion
affin que, par compassion,
puissions meriter mesouen
et en fin avoir gloire. Amen. (lines 29920–26)

[Since we have had time and space to reduce into a brief writing the Passion of Jesus Christ, let us have it recorded so that we might, through compassion, merit salvation and at the last have glory.]

The author is clearly avoiding exegesis or the managing of the theatrical framework.

This substantial difference in the framing device points to a notable diversity in the dramatic styles of the two dramatists. For Gréban there is an abiding concern with the narrative, presented with mythic authority which cannot be set aside, even when it is necessary to hasten over some episodes. Maurice Accarie has noticed that the emphasis here is upon the showing of events within the dramatic framework. We can add to this that there is a notable emphasis upon the mystery, in the sense of something wonderful but mysterious, in Gréban's approach. For Michel, however, there is a conscious limitation of objectives to the life of Christ as a man, and an avoidance of the wider mythological or mysterious aspects. This may explain why his framework is so much simpler, and much more is implied in the representation of events insofar as they may speak for themselves, and bearing in mind the limitations of human perception. As Accarie has suggested, Michel's emphasis is rather upon a humble approach to the mysteries, and in this he saw that the authors of earlier Passions, the *fatistes*, had perhaps overreached themselves.¹⁰ As a consequence of this approach we are much less aware of metatheatrical aspects in the work of Michel than we are with Gréban.

¹⁰ Maurice Accarie, *Le théâtre sacré de la fin du moyen âge: étude sur le sens moral de la Passion de Jean Michel* (Geneva: Droz, 1979), pp. 118–35.

Many Passions followed the lead given by Gréban and Michel. The latter was particularly influential because his Passion was printed many times in the fifty years after the 1486 production.¹¹ Although Gréban's Passion was apparently not printed it was much used. A case in point is *Le Mystère de la Passion de Troyes* which was performed many times between 1482 and 1531.¹² Though there was some original work in this text, much of it was borrowed directly from elsewhere. In particular Gréban's second and fourth day were taken over, becoming the end of Tome 2 and the whole of Tome 3 in the Troyes manuscript. Whilst there are no appearances of the Prologue elsewhere in the surviving text in these particular places the Troyes version incorporates the Prologue, the Prologue Finable, and the Prologue Finable and Total as they appear in Gréban, virtually word for word. Thus in this particular adaptation the more restrained approach to framing devices by Michel is modified by incorporating the practice of his predecessor.

II

Part of the fascination in a comparative study of cycle plays is the diversity which appears within each group. My impression is that there is a greater diversity in the large-scale plays from the German-speaking area than in France. It does appear that the pervasive influence of the Gréban-Michel plays in France cannot be paralleled by any one cycle in the German plays. Instead there were a number of localized inter-relationships between plays. But there is a similarity in the sense that in the places where we have rich documentation, such as Frankfurt, Alsfeld, and Lucerne, it shows that the text for each performance was worked up to be specific for it by means of adaptations, additions, and deletions. This means that for most plays there was never one ideally perfected version, and our attempts to discover what went on must always be guided by what the window available to us allows us to see.

In order to bring out the variety of approach I shall deal here with the plays from the following areas:

Lucerne: earliest known performance from 1450, texts in various recensions from 1545 to 1616, much background documentation, 11,436 lines, up to two days in performance.

¹¹ See Runnalls, *Les Mystères français imprimés*, pp. 139–48. For further influence, see also his *Les Mystères dans les provinces françaises* (Paris: Champion, 2003).

¹² Edited by Jean-Claude Bibolet, 2 vols (Geneva: Droz, 1987).

Künzelsau: date on manuscript is 1479, but copy thought to be 1511, 5878 lines.

Alsfeld: composite manuscript directly related to performances in 1501, 1511, and 1517, 8095 lines, three days in performance.¹³

It looks as though the development of the cycle plays in the German-speaking region started in the fifteenth century about the same time as the initial French versions. Though Expositor figures were common to both, these German versions had different applications and functions. The names for the German Expositor figures include Proclamator, Precursor, Regens Ludi, and Concluser. It should be noted that the length of the plays in German is usually not as great as in France, but that performances did extend beyond one day in a number of places. The actual playing time is especially difficult to gauge in the German versions because of two significant factors. Firstly, there was often distinctive processional element in the performance, and this is arguably a significant aspect of performance and of the relationship between the dramatic world and real life. It is not easy to estimate how much time was added to the performance by such processions. Secondly, it is apparent that there is a great deal of music, instrumental and vocal, in the German plays. Some of the detail of how this was used is known, but it is nevertheless very hard to estimate how much it affected the dynamics of performance as well as its length. It is tempting to see some of these plays as musical versions, and a good deal of the dramatic impact was meant to operate through musical effects.¹⁴

The plays from Alsfeld and Lucerne will be dealt with first because there are many similarities in their mode of performance. Both were played in a main public

¹³ The editions used are *Das Luzerner Osterspiel*, ed. by Heinz Wyss, 3 vols (Berne: Francke, 1967); *Das Künzelsauer Fronleichnamspiel*, ed. by Peter K. Liebenow (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1969); *The Alsfeld Passion Play*, ed. and trans. by Larry E. West (Lampeter: Mellen, 1997). There is a relationship between the Alsfeld play and the *Frankfurter Passionsspiel*: see the parallel texts in *Die Hessische Passionsspielgruppe, I Frankfurter Dirigierrolle; Frankfurter Passionsspiel*, ed. by Johannes Janota (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1996).

¹⁴ For a consideration of musical effects, mostly derived from the liturgy, see Karl Dreimüller, 'Die Musik im geistlichen Spiel des späten deutschen Mittelalters: Dargestellt am Alsfelder Passionsspiel', *Kirchenmusikalisches Jahrbuch*, 34 (1950), 27–54. Jorg O. Fichte goes so far as to suggest that the many liturgical items are the main structure and the intervening spoken dialogue exemplifies them: see his *Expository Voices in Medieval Drama: Essays on the Mode and Function of Dramatic Expression* (Nürnberg: Hans Carl, 1975), p. 49. Often the liturgical items are immediately paraphrased by the vernacular dialogue, as for example in the Washing of the Feet, 3075sd–3091.

square, using fixed locations which could be given specific identities. The action was divided into days in a way similar to the French versions we have considered, and thus the Expositor figure could be used as a link.

The methods adopted for the framing of the Alsfeld play and the use of Expositors are complex, and they suggest that there was an awareness of what might be achieved by exploiting diverse methods. It has already been noted that music is a substantial element: the play begins, on the first day, with a stage direction that, with all people in their appointed places, the angels are to sing 'Silete', the traditional call for silence (also found in some French and Dutch plays). This is rather enigmatic for us since it is difficult to know in what musical manner or setting such an item was presented. In the middle of the place the Proclamator then begins his speech. He sets out a severe picture of the need to be delivered from the pains of hell by pondering 'das groiss lyden und bittern toid' (the great suffering and bitter death, line 9) endured by our Lord. He dwells upon the sacrifice and asks for him to be thanked for stilling the wrath of the Father. He then urges the audience to make the most of what they see in the play towards their own salvation. His mode of address is to include his listeners in a generalized picture of human ingratitude: all shall be lost

die em synes lydes nit endancken,
das hie sso williglichen leyt
al vor die arm mentscheyt,
die grosse ubel hatte begangen. (lines 28–31)

[who do not show gratitude for his suffering, which he so willingly endured for poor humanity, responsible for so much evil.]

But this serious approach is to be set against the many diverting details of the real world embodied in the action of the play. Through the action we see much that is worldly and human, and the direct concern for salvation has to be given a strong voice in the expository framework.¹⁵

The Proclamator is then supported by the Director (Regens). He explains briefly that they will today show a part of the Passion. He urges the audience to be reverent and silent and invites them to join in singing *Veni sanctus spiritus* (Come, Holy Spirit, line 106). The Proclamator then takes over again, addressing the

¹⁵ See Larry E. West, 'The Expositor in the German Passion Play of the Late Middle Ages', in *Atti del IV Colloquio della Società Internazionale pour l'Etude du Théâtre Médiéval*, ed. by M. Chiabò, F. Doglio, and M. Maymone (Viterbo: Centro Studi sul Teatro Medioevale e Rinascimentale, 1983), pp. 97–110 (p. 97); and Fichte, *Expository Voices in Medieval Drama*, pp. 48–49.

people (line 107), this time to invoke the authority of the mayor in support of the inviolability of the playing place, described as a circle ('kreyss', line 111). The mayor must set the proper limit of space for the individual members of the audience, who must stand back from the stage. This passage is apparently strict and regulatory, yet its mode suggests some underlying humour, or irregular behaviour:

Ir lieben mentschen alle,
 swiget nu und lat uwer kallen!
 ich wyl uch vorkundigen eyn gebott,
 das der her schultheys thut:
 wer da betreden wirt in dissem kreyss,
 er sij Heyncz adder Concz adder wie er heyss,
 der do nit gehoret in dit spiel,
 (vor war ich uch das sagen wel!)
 der muss syn busse groiplich entphan:
 Mit den tufeln muss er yn die helle gan! (lines 107–16)

[Dear people, everyone, be silent now and stop your chatter! I wish to tell you of a proclamation from the mayor: If anyone who does not belong to this play should enter this circle, be he a Heinz or a Kunz or whatever — I tell you this in truth — he will be severely punished: he will have to go to hell with the devils.]

Perhaps related to this and just as it appears that the action is to begin there occurs a further framing device, though this time it is rather more mimetic. Lucifer climbs up on a barrel and summons the devils to support him against the sorcerer Jesus (line 178). It is perhaps not necessary to follow him further as he plots with his associates, but it is interesting that he is woven into the introduction to the play. This is a foretaste of what is to come, because in this cycle there are many places where the devil or devils become part of the narrative. The episode ends with a song and all the devils rush off to hell. But the introductory framework is still not quite over, for the Proclamator begins his speech again as earlier at line 107, but he is apparently interrupted by John the Baptist who comes, singing, out of the wilderness with his disciples and so begins the action proper (line 464).

The first day ends with the conversion of Mary Magdalene and Lucifer's indignation. After Christ has given his blessing to Simon and withdrawn, the Proclamator reappears (line 2910). He urges the audience to thank Christ who was murdered. The play is now interrupted and the audience should go to church to give thanks for God's suffering. He hopes for good weather tomorrow and indicates that they will show the torment of Christ and the suffering of his mother. This anticipation ends with his urging the audience to return; 'Gehet heym und kommet morn widder here!' (Go home and come back here tomorrow!, line 2929).

The Proclamator reveals two urgent preoccupations in his first speeches and these are taken up again later. One is the compassion felt by God the Father, and the other is the need to weep for Christ's suffering. This emotional state is appropriate for those who wish to enter heaven. The Proclamator begins the second day with a substantial narrative telling of God's creation and of man's fall from grace. These events do not form part of the drama itself, but the insertion here gives an overview of events appropriate to cyclic form. The turning point in this narrative is that God perceived that man was deceived by the serpent and that led to compassion:

Eedoch sach an der milde gott,
 Das en gab die slange den rayt
 Und hat sie beyde betrogen also:
 Das erbarmet en sicher jo
 Und wart geborn uff erden
 Von Marien der werden! (lines 2980–85)

[But God, who is mild, saw that the serpent gave them this counsel and in this way deceived them: he became merciful and was born on earth of Mary the most worthy!]

From this he proceeds to urge the audience to let their tears pour forth for his suffering:

Auch sollet ir das beweynen,
 ir groissen und er kleynn:
 uwer hercz sollet er uffslyssen
 und umb Jhesus lyden trene gyssen! (lines 2994–97)

[You should bemoan that, whether you are great or small: you should open up your hearts and your tears should flow for the suffering of Jesus.]

Taking a stern line, he demands silence and the lamentation of the audience. Thus their names will be inscribed and they will enter the Father's kingdom (lines 3009–3130).

Unfortunately, the clear transition between the second and the third day cannot be established. The text indicates that the Proclamator is to speak his verse (*rigmum*, two stage directions after line 5263, pp. 412, 414) but it does not give his words. Larry E. West suggests that they were not important enough to record or, perhaps more plausibly, that they were left to improvisation.¹⁶

The third day ends with the dispersal of the Apostles after the Ascension. The Proclamator immediately returns to the sufferings of Christ and the need for the

¹⁶ *Alsfeld Passion Play*, p. 644, n. 10.

spectators to weep: 'Uwer augen sollet ir giessen | Umb das liden unssers herren!' (Your eyes should flood with tears for the suffering of our lord!, lines 8071–72). He expresses the hope of salvation, but there is a strangely worldly moment when he seeks to refresh the audience: 'Nu sollet er zu husse ziehen, | Fladen essen und drinken wyn! (Now you all should go home, eat flatcakes and drink wine!, lines 8088–89). Then they are to go to church and pray for absolution. As Fichte points out, the Proclamator is deeply engaged in making events relevant to the salvation of individual members of the audience.¹⁷

The performance culture at Lucerne was built up over many years, from as early as 1450, and its manifest sophistication has been made more apparent by the meticulous work on the documents prepared and annotated by Renward Cysart, who was the Director for the performances of 1583 and 1597.¹⁸ The framing of the performance was very complex. First Schilltknab Proclamatoris (Shieldbearer or Squire of the Proclamator) calls for silence and Pater Aeternus and the Angels go to heaven. An angel sings 'Silete', the horn is sounded three times, and the trumpet sounds. Whereupon Fendrich (the standard bearer in front of the Proclamator) urges man and woman to pay attention and be silent. Speaking on behalf of his master, the Proclamator, he reminds them of the fall of Adam and how Christ died, was buried, and rose again:

Darumb so schwygend, ist min Raat,
Dann er üch geben wirdt zverstan
Von Adam dem ersten menschen an
Bis vff die zükunfft Jesu Christ
Wie er vns ztrotst mensch worden ist,
Ouch gstorben, begraben vnd erstanden. (lines 12–17)

[And so you should be quiet, that's what I advise, that it can be explained to you from Adam the first man onwards as far as the future Jesus Christ how he became man for our consolation, and did also die and was buried and then was resurrected.]

Everything is now ready and they must mark it carefully. The Proclamator himself then begins. A stage direction describes his movement: *The Proclamator rides about a little in the square; he takes his helmet off, turns towards heaven and speaks bareheaded* (line 20sd, translated). First he makes a prayer, and then he welcomes

¹⁷ *Expository Voices in Medieval Drama*, p. 95.

¹⁸ For an extensive discussion of Cysart's work on the play and its documentation, see M. Blakemore Evans, *The Passion Play of Lucerne: A Historical and Critical Introduction* (New York: Modern Language Association, 1943). See also John E. Tailby, 'Lucerne Revisited: Facts and Questions', *Leeds Studies in English*, n.s., 29 (1998), 347–58.

people of all kinds to the performance. He reminds them of the Ten Commandments and the need to avoid sin in order to go to heaven. He recounts some details of Christ's suffering and his concern with this leads him to urge the audience to offer a *Pater Noster*, an *Ave Maria*, and the creed (line 99).

At the end of the Proclamator's speech there begins a significant feature of this cycle as far as Expositors are concerned in that the first episode or act is introduced by one of the Doctors of the Church. In the first case, the episode of the Fall of Man, the Expositor is Gregory. An elaborate stage direction explains that he will speak from a pulpit and that this will be moved to other places when different teachers need to use it (line 104sd). His main function is a narrative one: he refers to the story of the days of the Creation and of the Temptation of Adam by Lucifer. He offers an interpretation which stresses the extent to which man has not carried out God's commands:

Vernemend mich, ir lieben fründ,
 Wie ir im dienst Gotts bsamlett sind,
 So wil ich üch nun zeigen an,
 Wie Got beschüff den ersten man
 Vss siner Gottheit krafft vnd gwallt
 Nach siner billdtnuss vnd gestallt,
 Das er im ghorsam, nitt übersäch,
 Was er in heiss, dasselb beschäch.
 Ouch wie Gott bschüff vss nütt, ist war,
 Himmel vnd erd, nach dem in gfar
 Lucifer zù der Hellen gfallen
 Samptt sinen mittgenossen allen,
 Von wegen das er nitt an der statt
 Den lobbt, so inn beschaffen hatt,
 Sonder vermeintt, im sin gelych;
 Darumb verstossen ward vom Himmelrych. (lines 105–20)

[Let me know, you dear friend, how you have come to God's service, and then I will now show you how God created the first man from his Godhead, strong and mighty, according to his likeness and form, so that he would obey him, not go against him, in all that he commanded that he would do. Everything that God created is useful, that's truth, heaven and earth after that Lucifer had fallen into hell together with all his cronies, because he didn't immediately praise him who had created him, but Lucifer thought that he was like God; and that's why he was exiled from heaven.]

This technique continues in that most of the acts of the play are introduced by Gregory, Jerome, Augustine, Ambrose, or Chrysostom. Usually these are the only Expositors, and besides attending to narrative they sometimes recall the events of the previous act, linking them to what is to come. They also draw attention to

figurative links between Old Testament figures and elements from the New as, for example, Ambrose in linking the sacrifice of Isaac with the Crucifixion:

So ir allhie nun habend gsehen,
Was wunderzeichens ist beschehen
An disen Isaac vnd Abraham,
Da er von gott den sägen nam
Vnd sin Sun ward erlösst vss nodt,
Den er durch Gott wolltt opfren ztod;
Ouch wie mitt grosser ghorsamkeitt
Isaac sim vatter was bereitt,
Mitt keinem wortt nie widersprach,
Sölch ghorsamkeitt gott gern ersach.
Daby son dir verstan vnd leeren
Die opffrung Christi Jesu dess herren,
Alls er am Crütz geopffertt wardt,
Unss do erlösst mitt martter hartt
Mitt sinem Rosenfarben blütt. (lines 781–95)

[As you have now all seen here what miraculous things did happen to this Isaac and Abraham that he was given a blessing by God and that his son was freed from peril when he wanted to sacrifice for God; and also with great obedience Isaac was prepared to obey his father and he did not object with one word, such obedience God gladly saw. So from this you will understand and learn about the sacrifice of Christ Jesu, the Lord, when he was sacrificed on the cross, and then gave salvation with martyr's heart with his rose-coloured blood.]

The presence of such prestigious figures of the Church adds much to the solemnity of the plays.¹⁹

The text of the Künzelsau cycle presents a number of difficulties, and I am in some doubt as to exactly how it is related to performance. Nevertheless, it does shed some light upon how an Expositor figure could be used. It seems to me most likely that this text relates to some kind of processional performance. Clearly there were three stations: the first is implied in the first stage direction, at the very beginning of the text, and the second and third are specifically mentioned at line 685sd and line 2139sd. At these points the Angels are to sing 'Silete', the musical call for silence, and often a punctuation of the action. The text is divided into a large number of episodes, and indeed its narrative runs from the Fall of the Angels to the Last Judgement. The episodes are, however, very dissimilar in length and

¹⁹ It should be noted that this use of patriarchal figures as Expositors is followed elsewhere. In the *Frankfurter Passionsspiel* St Augustine has many interventions in the narrative up to the Capture of Christ, after which he was no longer deemed necessary.

complexity. Some offer only one or two speeches, raising doubts about how far the word 'dramatic' can be applied to them, whereas others are rich in imaginative invention in both speech and action; these are undoubtedly 'dramatic'. But the most striking thing for this investigation is that practically every episode, whether long or short, simple or complex, is introduced by a speech given by the Rector Processionis (in some episodes he is called Rector Ludi, but this may just be a scribal difference).

His first action at the first station underlines that this is a Corpus Christi play as he seems to act as though he were a priest: *Rector Processionis vertat se ad sacramentum et dicat* (line 4sd). Possibly this means that the first station was in or near a church. He then prays that we understand the nature of the bread that has come from heaven in the form of Jesus Christ:

So mogen wir geeren wol
 Das sacrament gnaden vol,
 Das vns zu trost ist geben,
 Zu speisen jn das ewig leben.
 Das brat von himel komen ist,
 Dein warer leichnam, her Ihesu Crist.
 Lass vns dein gnad erwerben,
 Das wir an die speiss nit sterben.
 So wurt vns fur war gegeben
 Nach diser tzeit das ewig leben,
 Vnd werden gespeisst ewigleich
 Jn dem fron himelreich. (lines 11–22)

[So that we may gain the merciful sacrament, that is given to us as consolation as nourishment in eternal life. This bread came from heaven, your true body, Lord Jesus Christ. Let us gain your mercy so that we do not die from this food. To us is given in truth at this time eternal life, and we will be nourished with that forever from the kingdom of heaven.]

This first speech ends with a hymn, and then the Rector turns and addresses the people (line 26sd). He urges their attention, reminding them of the sacrament. After an *Ave Maria* he then introduces the first episode.

Exactly how he was used after this beginning must depend upon how one interprets the rest of the proceedings. It looks as though the programme for the day consisted firstly of a procession and that there were two stopping places where some performance event took place, perhaps a substantial musical item as well as some dialogue. Finally the procession reached the square where there was a dramatic enactment, including much music, and it was here the words ascribed to Rector before each episode were used. N. C. Brooks has made it clear that the performance of German plays combined a processional element with dramatic

enactment in a surprising number of ways. One of these is the possibility that during a procession a stop might be made for a specific item to be performed.²⁰ I am particularly struck by the form of words which are used to mark the beginning of episodes or the moments when new characters enter the action. Usually it is the appropriate form of the Latin verb *accedere*, to arrive. Thus when the devils come on to rejoice at the fall of Adam and Eve, the stage direction reads *Tunc accedunt dyabuli* (line 412sd), and the beginning of the Cain and Abel episode has *Tunc Cain et Abel accedunt* (line 424sd). Immediately after these arrival directions, which seem appropriate for the successive items in a procession, the Rector regularly addresses the people.²¹

In his interventions the Rector draws attention to figural links, as between Noah's ark and Mary's body:

Dy archa bedewt uns wol
 Dy rein Maria genaden vol,
 In dy vnser her Ihesus Crist kam,
 Vnd menschlich natur an sich nam. (lines 557–60)

[The ark stands for the pure Maria, full of mercy, to whom our Lord Jesus Christ came, and took on human form.]

He also refers to aspects of thematic importance such as Obedience (line 622). It has been noted how the dramatic scope of individual episodes varies greatly; the role of the Rector varies accordingly. For example the episode of the Three Kings, including the encounter with Herod and his contemplation of a response to the news they give him about the birth, is developed in much detail. During the course of it the Rector intervenes several times to give narrative details to the people. These interventions are sometimes marked *legat ad populum*, perhaps suggesting that he reads to the people from the Bible. Such items occur at the points where the Kings find the baby, Gabriel warns them to avoid Herod, and then warns Joseph to leave Bethlehem (lines 1953sd, 1977sd, and 1996sd). The narrative

²⁰ N. C. Brooks, 'Processional Drama and Dramatic Procession in Germany in the Late Middle Ages', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 32 (1933), 141–71 (p. 144). Alan E. Knight has noted that in the performances at Lille individual items were mimed at places en route and performed in full in the Market Square at the climax of the proceedings: see *Les mystères de la procession de Lille*, vol 1: *Le pentateuque* (Geneva: Droz, 2001), p. 55.

²¹ For a fuller discussion of the possible staging of the *Künzelsauer*, see my *Cyclic Form and the English Mystery Plays*, pp. 178–84. After reviewing a number of possible combinations of procession and staging in this cycle, N. C. Brooks comes to a view of the proceedings close to the one suggested here: see 'Processional Drama and Dramatic Procession', pp. 162–66.

functions are sometimes to anticipate what is about to happen and sometimes to cover what is not actually shown. The latter is intimately related to the kinds of dramatization which are employed, and thus his words are of considerable importance in establishing the nature of the dramatic modes employed.

A particularly striking presentation is used for the Crucifixion. Unlike the English and French parallels, the act of the crucifixion is not performed here. The text moves rapidly from Pilate washing his hands to an emblematic evocation of the crucifixion. The presentation relies upon three appearances of Christ, presumably played by different actors. One carries the crown of thorns (line 3671sd). One, perhaps the most emotive, comes with the column of the Scourging (line 3679sd):

Nu merckent, frawen vnd man, zu disen stunden,
 Wy got wartt an dy sewl gebunden,
 Gegaisselt dar an vnd geslagen ser
 Vnd dar zu gemartert mer.
 Dy ritter nicks gantz an seinem leib lisen
 Von der scheittel biss uff dy fusse.
 Ir solt bedencken von gantzem hertzen
 Gotes marter vnd sein grossen smertzen.
 So wurtt euch geben das himelreich
 Vnd werdent den heiligen engel gleich. (lines 3680–89)

[Now take note you women and men at this hour, how God was tied to this pillar and was scourged and struck terribly and tormented in other ways. The knights left nothing whole on his body from his skull to his feet. You must remember with whole heart God's martyrdom and his great agony. You will be given the kingdom of heaven and become exactly like the holy angels.]

The third Christ carries the cross (line 3689sd).²² Notice how few lines elapse between these references: the action is emblematic and processional rather than dialogic or containing a physical enactment. For each of these images of Christ the Rector reads a brief description to the people. After a priest has shown the emblem of the cross, the Rector introduces the Virgin carrying a sword and accompanied by St John and the three Marys. There is no dialogue at all after Pilate washes his hands. The only speakers throughout these climactic moments are the Rector and the Priest speaking directly to the people until the episode ends, making way for the Descent from the Cross.

²² The word *accedat* is still used for these stage directions.

As this cycle approaches its end the narrative element in the Rector's function declines somewhat and he is given a more interpretative role as though his function were largely didactic. He introduces the Twelve articles of Faith, and in the dispute between Ecclesia and Synagogue he speaks for the former (line 4427sd). He has two speeches in the Antichrist episode, in one of which he summarizes the trickery of the protagonist. He also plays a key role in the Last Judgement, introducing the whole episode, as well as the dispute between the Soul and the Body. After the Souls have been divided he introduces a new sequence by calling upon the Virgin as Mother of Pity to intervene:

Wu bistu nu, du muter aller barmhertzickait;
 Sihe an diss gross hertze laytt.
 Maria, kum her, es ist tzeitt,
 Wan aller drost an dir leytt.
 Wiltu den sunder verlan,
 So mag ym nyman bey gestan.
 Dein barmhertzickait ist also gross,
 Ich hoff, du machst den sunder lass. (lines 5731–38)

[Where are you now, you mother of all mercy; look upon the suffering of your great heart. Maria, come it is time, for all solace lies in you. If you would leave the sinner, then nobody can help him. Your mercy is so great, I hope you will make the sinner good.]

This is his last intervention. Mary responds by interceding with her Son. The epilogue is conducted by a Pappa who returns to the opening theme of the flesh and blood of Christ, appropriate for Corpus Christi.

Whatever the precise nature of the performance and the difficulties of interpreting it from the present state of this text, the Rector Processionis seems to have been an indispensable part of it, and his introduction of each succeeding sequence must have held the performance together. By comparison with the methods used in the French Passions his function here is far more particular and it is closely related to individual episodes as he frames them with interpretations and helps with the management of the narrative.

Nevertheless the manifestations of Expositors discussed here make it clear that they added a great deal to the dramatic texture of cycle plays in France and Germany. It is plain that they did not all act in exactly the same way and we must be aware of a range of activities by them. In various ways they elaborated the dramatic experience by adding layers of interpretation, worship, and doctrinal exegesis. In doing so they could act in a priest-like manner, leading prayers, preaching, and urging their listeners towards the emotional aspects of what was enacted and towards the practice of the faith. The listeners might be both the

characters within the action of the play and the audience placed outside it, but capable of being drawn into a closer involvement. The presence of figures who illuminated doctrine and underlined figurative links based upon patriarchal authority suggests that it was felt necessary to place an emphasis upon instruction. But perhaps the most intriguing aspect is the process by which the progress of the plays was managed through the Expositor figures. Standing outside the action for the most part they brought attention to the narrative and the process of its enactment and ensured that it could be appreciated in a multivalent way.

I should like to add one afterthought. The dates of the cycles discussed here precede the dates of the extant texts of the English Chester and N.town cycles and the fragmentary survivals of John Bale's lost mystery cycle. The development of the *Contemplatio* figures in these English cycles has some similarities to these continental precedents.²³

²³ I have considered these in 'Metatheatre in the English Mystery Cycles: Expositor, *Contemplatio*, Prolocutor, and Others', *Theta*, 7 (2007), 89–108 (online at <<http://www.cesr.univ-tours.fr/>>).

DIRECTING THE GAZE: EXPOSITORY MODES IN LATE MEDIEVAL ITALIAN PLAYS

Nerida Newbigin

The scene: a parish church on a hill above Florence; the day: a Palm Sunday in the present, when parishioners traditionally receive a consecrated olive branch that protects their home throughout the year to come; the readings: chapters 26 and 27 of St Matthew's Gospel.¹ The priest takes the part of narrator and expositor; the congregation and acolytes take the roles of Christ and his followers, and also of Pilate, Herod, and the Jews. There can be no more cogent reminder that the origins of Italian religious drama lie in the narrative of the Old and New Testaments and of the Apocryphal books, and that participation in the narrative brings the congregation into immediate contact with the words of the text and the mystery they represent. Since the Gospels, with their combination of direct speech and linking narrative, provide the blueprint for words and action in the earliest drama of fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Italy, it may be useful to look at the surviving dramatic texts to see what remains of the narrator's role, not only in the earliest plays of Christ's Passion, but also in later plays on other themes. In this chapter I shall examine a selection of Italian dramatic and narrative texts from the fourteenth to the sixteenth centuries, ranging from private, meditative 'visualizations' of the Passion to ducal performances of the Annunciation and the celebratory descriptions of the event.

Lay participation in the liturgy of the Mass is, of course, post-Vatican II (1962–65), but late medieval Italian lay confraternities, inspired by the preaching

¹ The modern Roman Ritual offers three alternatives, each either long or short: A: Matthew 26. 14–27. 66 or 27. 11–54; B: Mark 14. 1–15. 47 or 15. 1–39; C: Luke 22. 14–23. 56 or 23. 1–49.

of the mendicant orders and the memory systems and visualization techniques employed in Dominican and Franciscan preaching respectively, devised their own dramatic dialogues to assist them in their meditations on the Passion of Christ. The prototype, of conventual Franciscan rather than confraternal origins, is Jacopone da Todi's *Donna de paradiso*, a *lauda* in thirty-three stanzas and a refrain, which narrates and enacts the events from the moment in which Mary is told that her son has been captured to her lament at the foot of the cross as he dies.² It is all in direct, rather than reported, speech but contains no indication of speakers for each line. The principal voices are those of a messenger and of the Virgin, but we also hear the voices of Jesus and of the Jews. The messenger, sometimes identified by modern editors simply as *Nunzio* and sometimes as St John the Evangelist, is both part of the events enacted and the narrator who describes what has gone before and directs the mind's eye to what is happening now, as Christ is brought to the cross and nailed to it.

There are numerous meditative traditions at work here. There is the visual iconographic tradition of the great historiated crosses (i.e. adorned with figures for narrative purposes) that were suspended above the altars of the conventual churches from the time of Cimabue onwards: Mary, at the tip of Christ's outstretched right hand, and John, on the left, are the primary witnesses of the Passion, and the worshipper accompanies them and sees Christ's death through their eyes. An analogous written guide to this mystical meditation is also found in the *Meditations on the Life of Christ* (c. 1300) where the author directs his reader, probably a Clarissan nun, to meditate moment by moment on each element of Christ's suffering.³ Jacopone's 'narrator' figure is not so much a dramatic expedient as a structural part of the mystical tradition. His poem, moreover, should not be called a play: we have no indication of costumes or actions, and it is likely that 'performance' did not go past the division of singers into groups representing the different voices of the narrative.

Within four decades of Jacopone's death, more extended dramatic treatments of the Easter narrative being performed in the lay confraternities of Umbria may be found, along with dramatizations of the Lenten gospels and of other feast days throughout the year. In the Easter plays that survive there is no suggestion of a

² Jacopone da Todi (1236–1306), *Laude*, ed. by Franco Mancini (Bari: Laterza, 1974), pp. 201–06, n. 70.

³ *Meditations on the Life of Christ* [attributed formerly to St Bonaventure, and more recently to Johannes de Caulibus], ed. by Isa Ragusa and Rosalie B. Green (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961), chapters LXXV–LXXX.

narrator character (although some of the *laude* are purely narrative); even in the Harrowing of Hell play (*Laus Sabbati Sancti*), the first-person narrator of the source (the Latin A version of the Acts of Pilate) disappears completely in the dramatization.⁴ No description is extant of a fourteenth-century performance of the Perugian Holy Week cycle, and there is no indication of how the costumes listed in the inventories were used in performances. For 1448, however, there is a clear indication that Friar Ruberto da Lecce used a performance of the Passion in Perugia's main square, flanked by the cathedral and the Palazzo dei Priori, as a climactic finale to his Lenten sermons.⁵ Throughout Italy, it was the practice of the city to invite a distinguished preacher to deliver sermons in the cathedral throughout Lent, and similar sequences of sermon and performance are found through to the nineteenth century.⁶ It is known from manuals on preaching and prayer, as well as from the treatises of the *ars memoriae*, that preachers practised a form of visualization in order to imprint a sequence of events or experiences in the memory of the listener; and in medieval understanding of knowledge, the eye was the first gateway to the intellect and the second the ear. The performance of plays at the behest of preachers had a didactic function, working through both sight and hearing to impress on the viewer the narrative in all its parts. The scene becomes the rhetorical 'theatre of memory' which the viewer can then walk through again, remembering each element in its appropriate place and in the correct order.

In Florence in the mid-fifteenth century, aural and visual traditions come together in the *sacra rappresentazione*. The verse medium is not the *ballata* or ballad as it had been in the Umbrian plays of the fourteenth century (and in the

⁴ *Laude drammatiche e rappresentazioni sacre*, ed. by Vincenzo De Bartholomaeis, 3 vols (Florence: Le Monnier, 1943), I, 243–58; see also his *Origini della poesia drammatica*, 2nd edn (Turin: Società Editrice Italiana, 1952), pp. 219–53; and Nerida Newbiggin, 'Appunti sul testo della laude perugina del Sabato Santo', in *Miscellanea di studi romanzi offerti a Giuliano Gasca Queirazza*, ed. by Anna Cornagliotti and others, 2 vols (Turin: Dell'Orso, 1988), II, 781–91.

⁵ *Cronaca della città di Perugia dal 1309 al 1491 nota col nome di Diario del Graziani*, in *Cronache e storie inedite della città di Perugia dal MCL al MDLXIII seguite da inediti documenti*, ed. by Francesco Bonaini and others, special issue, *Archivio storico italiano*, 16 (1850–51), 69–750 (pp. 598–99); the relevant passage is reproduced in Alessandro D'Ancona, *Origini del teatro italiano*, 2nd edn (Turin: Loescher, 1891), I, 280–81, and discussed in Mara Nerbano, 'Cultura materiale nel teatro delle confraternite umbre', *Teatro e storia*, 12 (1997), 293–346 (pp. 298–311).

⁶ For details of a sermon followed by a performance of the Resurrection in Milan in 1475, see D'Ancona, *Origini*, II, 290; for later instances, see *Origini*, II, 212–21.

English plays of the same period), but rather the *ottava rima*, a literary verse form first used by Boccaccio in his *Teseide* (1340). Since it was jauntier and more versatile than the *terza rima*, which in any case had only limited success after Dante, it was quickly appropriated as the preferred medium for subjects narrated in verse. It was used by the court poets Boiardo, Ariosto, and Tasso of northern Italy (and by Luigi Pulci in Florence) as they domesticated the French *chansons de geste* in Italian chivalric romances; and it became the standard verse form of the *canterini*, who were able to improvise or memorize narratives of considerable length, on subjects ranging from Bible stories and the lives of saints to the fictional deeds of classical heroes and Carolingian paladins, erotic fictions of wenches and parish priests, and celebrations of recent battles, floods, and disasters.

In Florence, the practitioners of this art performed in the tiny piazza in front of the Oratory of the Dodici Buonomini di San Martino, a charitable organization founded by Cosimo de' Medici to administer poor relief in the city. Men of all social strata gathered to listen, to memorize, and sometimes ultimately to record the *cantari* they heard in their *zibaldoni*.⁷ The momentum of the *ottava rima* moves the action along, employing a repertoire of rhyme, rhythm, and rhetorical invention that astonished contemporaries. *Canterini* were not the only people to collect and recite these poems. From the early fourteenth century Florentine civic pride found expression in the reading, writing, copying, and reciting of vernacular verse of all kinds, and large numbers of miscellanies survive containing sonnets, *cantari*, and *sacre rappresentazioni* preserved for personal pleasure rather than for any institutional memory. The narrator is often a first-person presence in the *cantare*, but the abundance of direct speech that he introduces suggests a performance style in which the narratorial voice gives way to impersonation, with the *canterino* performing all parts and all voices and also commenting, often ironically, on the behaviour of his characters.

In the 1440s, youth confraternities, a new form of youth socialization that had first appeared in Florence in the 1420s, were actively promoted and restructured by Pope Eugenius IV, then resident in Florence.⁸ In accordance with their aims

⁷ For a recent account of the role of *canterini* in Florentine society, see Dale Kent, *Cosimo de' Medici: The Patron's Oeuvre* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), pp. 43–50. Numerous scholars, including Blake Wilson and Marco Villoresi, are studying the music and texts of the *canterini*.

⁸ Konrad Eisenbichler, *The Boys of the Archangel Raphael: A Youth Confraternity in Florence, 1411–1785* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), p. 30.

to provide moral and spiritual education to young men, a number of these confraternities, and possibly all of them, organized chaste carnival entertainments as an alternative to the often licentious *mummie* or masks that were long the custom of Florentine youth. In 1449, the youth confraternity of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary began performing a *sacra rappresentazione* of the Purification of the Virgin,⁹ and in the same year Feo Belcari's *Abramo e Isac* was first performed in the convent of Santa Maria Maddalena in Cestello in Borgo Pinti.¹⁰ Since Belcari's play is by far the most copied of all the fifteenth century *sacre rappresentazioni* and close to being the prototype for all those that followed, it is worth observing more closely.¹¹

The play is introduced by an Angel, 'l'angelo che annunzia', whose purpose is to greet the audience and ask for silence, to outline the action and the moral to be drawn from it, and to return at the end of the play to bid the audience farewell ('dà la licenza'). Belcari, who listed his sources as Origen, Josephus, and Nicholas of Lyra, draws extensively on Origen for the 'meaning' of the story of Abraham:

L'ANGIOLO *annunzia la festa:*

L'occhio si dice ch'è la prima porta
per la qual lo 'ntelletto intende e gusta;
la seconda è l'udir con voce scorta,
che fa la mente vostra esser robusta.
Però vedrete ed udirete in sorta
recitar una storia santa e giusta;
ma se volete intender tal misterio
state devoti e con buon desiderio.

Nel Genesis la santa Bibbia narra
che Dio volse provar l'ubidienza
del patriarca Abram, sposo di Sarra,
e per un angel gli parlò in presenza.

THE ANGEL *announces the play:*

The eye is said to be the first gateway
through which the intellect perceives and savours.
The second is hearing the clear voice
that makes your minds strong.
For this reason you will see and hear
recited a story, holy and just;
but if you want to understand this mystery,
watch and listen with devotion and good will.

In Genesis the holy Bible tells
that God wanted to test the obedience
of Abraham the patriarch, husband of Sarah,
and came to speak to him in the form of an angel.

⁹ Nerida Newbigin, 'The Word Made Flesh: The *Rappresentazioni* of Mysteries and Miracles in Fifteenth-century Florence', in *Christianity and the Renaissance: Image and Religious Imagination in the Quattrocento*, ed. by Timothy Verdon and John Henderson (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1990), pp. 361–75 (pp. 364–67). Preparations began in November 1449 for performance on 2 February 1449/50. On the confraternity, see Lorenzo Polizzotto, *Children of the Promise: The Confraternity of the Purification and the Socialization of Youths in Florence, 1427–1785* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

¹⁰ D'Ancona, *Origini*, I, 260.

¹¹ Nerida Newbigin, 'Il testo e il contesto dell'*Abramo e Isac* di Feo Belcari', *Studi e problemi di critica testuale*, 23 (1981), 13–37.

Allora Abram le sue orecchie sbarra,
inginocchiato con gran reverenza,
avendo el suo disio tutto disposto
di voler far quanto gli fusse imposto.

Idio gli disse: toglì il tuo figliuolo
unigenit'Isac, el qual tu ami,
e di lui fammi sacrificio solo:
e mosterotti il monte, perché brami
sapere el loco; e non menare stuolo;
va', ch'io tel mosterrò senza mi chiami
Cammina per la terra aspra e deserta,
e fammi sol del tuo figliuolo offerta.

Considerate un poco el parlar solo
di tal comandamento con suo rami:
non bisognava dir, dopo el figliuolo
unigenit'Isac, el qual tu ami,
se non per darli maggior pena e duolo,
aprendo del suo cor tutt'i serrami
però che Ismaël era in esilio
con la sua madre, per divin consilio.

Non dice Dio che l'uccida in quell'ora
ma fallo andar per tre giorni in viaggio,
perché il dolore abbia lunga dimora,
col figlio andando pel loco selvaggio.
Tutto 'l suo cor di doglia si devora,
ponendo addosso sopra el figliuol saggio
le legne; ed egli insieme per quel loco
portava in mano il gran coltello e 'l foco.

Isac<che> disse allora: O padre mio,
dov'è la bestia che debbe esser morta?
Abram rispose: El nostro grande Dio
provederà ch'ella ci sarà porta.
Fa' pur d'avere in lui tutto 'l disio,
e questo peso volentier sopporta.
Qualunque serve a Di<o> con puro core
sostiene ogni fatica per suo amore.

Questo parlar di Isac er'un coltello,
che 'l cor del santo Abram feriva forte,
pensando ch'al figliuol suo, dolce e bello
con le sue proprie man dovea dar morte.
Da molte cose era tentato quello
non obedire a così dura sorte:

Then Abraham opened his ears wide,
as he kneeled most reverently,
having resolved in his heart
to do whatever he was asked.

God said to him: Take your only-begotten son
Isaac, whom you love,
and sacrifice him, all alone, to me,
and I will show you the mountain, because you want
to know the place, and take no one with you.
Go, and I will show you where, without you asking.
Walk through the desert wilderness,
and all alone make me an offering of your son.

Consider for a moment just the words
of this command and their ramifications:
he didn't have to add, to 'your son' the words
'only begotten', and 'Isaac, whom you love',
except to add to his pain and suffering,
opening the sorrow locked in his heart
since Ishmael was in exile
with his mother, by divine counsel.

God does not say to kill him at once,
but makes him travel for three days
so that the sorrow lasts longer
as he goes through the wilderness with his son.
His whole heart is devoured by grief
as he places the wood on the back
of his wise son; and through that place together
he carried in his hand the great knife and the fire.

Then Isaac said, O father,
where is the animal that is to be slain?
Abraham replied, Our great Lord God
will provide for it to be brought to us.
Submit your will entirely to his
and bear this weight with good cheer.
Those who serve God with a pure heart
undertake every task for his love.

These words of Isaac were a knife
that pierced deeply into blessed Abram's heart,
as he thought of how he was to take the life
of his beautiful sweet son.
He was tempted in many ways
not to obey what cruel fate had ordained.

Ma del servire a Dio avendo sete
volse obedir, sì come voi vedrete.¹²

But since he longed to serve God
he resolved to obey, as you will see.

By the end of the play, the audience has been taken through the events three full times: here in the prologue, in the action itself, in Isaac's account to his mother on his return home. The expository material is not confined to one character alone, and the adolescents in the play as well as those in the audience cannot fail to grasp the moral that is expounded again in the *lauda*, sung as the members of Abraham's household dance in a circle, each accompanied by an angel: 'Chi serve a Dio con purità di cuore | vive contento e poi salvato muore' (He who serves God with a pure heart | lives happily and then dies saved).

The earliest printing of this play in 1485, which is probably also the first printing of any *sacra rappresentazione*,¹³ does not yet contain the two iconographical elements that will come to identify the genre, but from the early 1490s, when Antonio Miscomini and Bartolomeo de' Libri started printing large numbers of *sacre rappresentazioni* composed in the 1440s to the 1470s,¹⁴ the 'angelo che annunzia' becomes the Angel of Mary's Annunciation, bearing a lily (Fig. 3). The Angel appears in a woodcut on the title page that is copied and recopied for the next two centuries, and below the Angel, a second and larger woodcut represents the climax of the action. In the case of the Abraham and Isaac play it is that moment when the Angel appears to stay Abraham's hand as the ram in the thicket waits to replace Isaac on the altar of the burnt offering; for Saint Eufrosina, who has lived for thirty-eight years as Frate Smeraldo, it is the moment when her father

¹² The text is taken from the most authoritative manuscript, Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, MS Magliabechiano VII.690, fols 106'-107', rather than from the classic anthology, *Sacre rappresentazioni dei secoli XIV, XV e XVI*, ed. by Alessandro D'Ancona, 3 vols (Florence: Le Monnier, 1872) [hereafter *SR*], I, 41-59), which is based on the printed edition of 1485. There are some important differences: *vostra* for *nostra* in line 3; *vedrete* for *udirete* in line 56; the translation is mine.

¹³ For a check list of printed editions of *sacre rappresentazioni*, see Alfredo Cioni, *Bibliografia delle sacre rappresentazioni*, Biblioteca Bibliografica Italiana, 22 (Florence: Sansoni, 1961) [hereafter Cioni]; for manuscripts and printed editions in the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale in Florence, see Anna Maria Testaverde and Anna Maria Evangelista, *Sacre rappresentazioni manoscritte e a stampa conservate nella Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze*, Inventari e Cataloghi Toscani, 25 (Florence: Giunta Regionale Toscana; Milan: Editrice Bibliografica, 1988); and for manuscripts in the Biblioteca Riccardiana in Florence, see Silvia Castelli, *Manoscritti teatrali della Biblioteca Riccardiana di Firenze: catalogo ragionato* (Florence: Polistampa, 1998).

¹⁴ Nerida Newbiggin, 'Plays, Printing and Publishing, 1485-1500: The Florentine *sacre rappresentazioni*', *La bibliofilia*, 90 (1988), 269-96.



Figure 3. The 'angelo che annunzia', title page of the first edition of *La festa di sancta Eufroxina*, printed in Florence by Bartolomeo de' Libri in the last decade of the fifteenth century, Milan, Biblioteca Trivulziana, Triv. Inc. C 278, fol. 1^r. The lower woodcut represents the body of Eufrosina/Friar Smeraldo, with her father, the Abbot, and fellow monks gathered around. By permission of the *Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali*.

sees her again; for Santa Cristina, it is when she is protected by a bubble after being thrown in the lake with a millstone around her neck; and so on. Whether hearing and seeing the play in public, or reading it in private, the viewer or reader was given every kind of pointer to enable him to imprint the narrative in his memory. The Angel was, however, an angel and a prologue,¹⁵ rather than a narrator, a *meneur du jeu*, or a *festaiuolo*. Where the performance space had machinery that allowed it, the Angel descended from heaven and returned there when he had finished speaking. The same machinery could be used to send other angels in the course of the action, to take the soul of the martyr up to heaven, and to send the ‘angelo che licenzia’ to recapitulate plot and moral and bid farewell to the audience. In Belcari’s play he returns to speak to Abraham ‘in persona’ (rather than in a dream, as the exegesis of Nicholas of Lyra and Origen makes clear) to send him to sacrifice Isaac, and he appears again, when Abraham is about to bring the knife down on Isaac’s neck, to save son and father from the painful but necessary sacrifice.

There is, then, no ‘narrator’ in the play, but performance rather than reading of the play reveals that the play is nevertheless held together by a single character. With little interpolated business, the play follows the narrative of Genesis, and the voice of Abraham, already an old man, dominates, taking twenty of the sixty-four stanzas. His lines are punctuated by those of the Angels, Isaac, Sarah, and the servants, but the weighty lines of the play are all his, and their *gravitas* suggests an adult performer, possibly the adult *guardiano* of the confraternity, appointed by Pope Eugenius himself, surrounded by younger, lighter voices.

Despite the absence of any textual evidence to support the idea that fifteenth-century Italian *sacre rappresentazioni* regularly employed a narrator or expository figure, a very beguiling notion has gained currency in the art historical literature that a character in a painting whose gaze engages the spectator directly is to be linked with the *festaiuolo* or expositor character of the *sacra rappresentazione*. This unfortunate misconception was initiated by D’Ancona and diffused widely in anglophone art-historical scholarship by Michael Baxandall:

¹⁵ The Angel’s prologue may well have had a classical model. Feo Belcari, among the earliest of the Florentine creators of *sacre rappresentazioni*, had a humanistic education and was certainly aware of Plautus and Terence as dramatic models. In an undated sonnet, he praises Lorenzo de’ Medici as one into whom Plautus and Terence, like Neptune, have poured their muse, while he, Feo, flounders ‘like a sick whale or a blind tunny-fish’ (‘Ma io per questo mare ombroso nauto | come inferma balena o cieco tunno | bramando te per padre e per alunno | ché regga l’andar mio torto ed incauto’); see Antonio Lanza, *Lirici toscani del Quattrocento*, 2 vols (Rome: Bulzoni, 1972–75), I, 237.

Such fragmentary hints as one can find about the acting of the plays suggest that what they had in common with the pictures may have been, paradoxically, what seem to us anti-dramatic conventions rather than realism. For instance, the plays were introduced by a choric figure, the *festaiuolo*, often in the character of an angel, who remained on the stage during the action of the play as a mediator between the beholder and the events portrayed: similar choric figures, catching our eyes and pointing to the central action, are often used by the painters. [Baxandall's Plate 37 reproduces Filippo Lippi's Uffizi panel, *Virgin Adoring the Child*, c. 1465.] [. . .] They are even recommended by Alberti in his *Treatise on Painting*: 'I like there to be a figure which admonishes and instructs us about what is happening in [the] picture. . . . ' The Quattrocento beholder would have perceived such choric figures through his experience.¹⁶

The example of the Abraham and Hagar play that Baxandall goes on to adduce will be central to my discussion of sixteenth-century plays below, but I will simply assert here that the *festaiuolo* of that play was not an expository character and that no such character existed. I shall deal now with the questions of the function of the *festaiuoli*, and the ways in which plays and the learning of parts was organized.

'Festaiuolo' throughout the fifteenth century is a generic term for one of the individuals appointed to take responsibility for the organization of celebrations for a *festa* or feast day. The Priors of Florence appointed a committee of *festaiuoli* to organize city-wide celebrations for the St John the Baptist feast day; individual confraternities appointed *festaiuoli* each year to coordinate arrangements for *feste* that could range from special food, decorations, and illuminations to the wonderful plays of the Annunciation, Ascension, and Pentecost in the churches of the *Oltrarno*. The Ascension play in Santa Maria del Carmine had three performance spaces: Heaven, Paradise, and Earth (with Jerusalem and the Mount of Olives), and the *festaiuoli* were designated *Sant'Abate di Cielo*, *Sant'Abate di Paradiso*, and *Sant'Abate di Terra*. Their responsibilities were for the operation of the machinery at each level and for security, and their respective crews were identified by different coloured

¹⁶ Michael Baxandall, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy*, 2nd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp. 71–72. Baxandall was misled by D'Ancona, *Origini*, I, 422–23: 'Alcune norme del recitare rileviamo dalle didascalie. Il *Festaiuolo*, quando cominciava lo spettacolo, andava a sedere, certo in posto separato, come il *Corago* del Dramma greco: forse sul palco stesso, ma non confuso cogli attori' (We can derive some of the performance practices from the rubrics. When the play began, the *festaiuolo* went to sit down, certainly in some separate place, like the *corago* of Greek Drama, perhaps on the stage itself, but not mixed up with the actors, p. 423); the Abraham and Hagar play is, however, the only surviving play that has a *festaiuolo* as a character, and it cannot be called a norm. D'Ancona's understanding of the *corago* is probably influenced by his reading of the French plays: see *Origini*, I, 185 note.

beads.¹⁷ There is no suggestion that they were a visible part of the action, and there is no evidence of a *festaiuolo* on stage who directed the action or acted as continuous onstage prompt. On the contrary, such was the cultivation of the art of memorizing vernacular poetry and reciting it that it is reasonable to expect that Florentines simply learnt their parts and had no further need for prompting.

This was certainly true of the Easter plays performed by the Confraternity of the Gonfalone in the Roman Colosseum between 1490 and 1539. Evidence from the account books from the 1530s, read in conjunction with editions, fragments, and drafts of the play from different periods and with the company's statutes, reveals a rehearsal process that began first of all with recruiting volunteer musicians. People were then paid to copy music and to copy individual roles for the actors, called *rotuli* or 'rolls', that is, long strips of paper that contained all the character's lines, cued by the first line of the preceding stanza.¹⁸ The play changed from year to year: scenes of Christ's miracles (the Woman Possessed by Spirits, the Man Blind from Birth, the Centurion's Son, and so on) added or subtracted at will; the Desperation of Judas could be hammed up or stripped down to its essentials. It would seem, however, that for some of those involved it was sufficient to give just the first line of each stanza to be included and the actor involved knew what to do. There is unequivocal evidence that the actors spoke and sang their parts and, given the huge space and fragmented surfaces of the Colosseum, they did so with enormous effort.

The 1495 statutes of the Gonfalone company prescribe the process of preparing the play:

On the Passion of our Lord and other plays

Since the origin and foundation of this venerable company is the performance every year of the Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ and of other mysteries or martyrdoms of saints, as the members of the company as a whole shall determine, we resolve and ordain that the supervisors, as set out above, may spend each year on the Passion twenty-five ducats, not including the suppers, or more after discussion, as is set out in the chapter on the supervisors, and they may have it performed in our place in the Colosseum or in any other place determined by the company, short or long, as the supervisors shall determine. And the other officials and the men of the company shall be required to help them in everything, especially in finding properties and musicians, and in organizing for the musicians, when they meet or rehearse the Passion, a decent meal and supper where and when the

¹⁷ Nerida Newbigin, *Feste d'Oltrarno: Plays in Churches in Fifteenth-Century Florence*, 2 vols (Florence: Olschki, 1996), I, 108–09 and 112–13.

¹⁸ On rolls and rôles, see Nerida Newbigin, 'Judas and the Jews in the Easter Plays of the Roman Confraternity of the Gonfalone', *European Medieval Drama*, 3 (1999), 19–39.

supervisors ask them to. Further, the wardens shall be required to send people about the usual places, and especially to the preachers, whom they are to exhort to expedite their sermons so that they do not delay the Passion. And on Good Friday, no man of our company may come on to the stage or any other place set up for the flagellants without his habit, on pain of being convicted for false swearing and being recorded in the *Specchio* ledger among the transgressors, except for the one warden nominated by the supervisors, and the treasurer and up to six supervisors, and other persons who might be necessary for some purpose in the Passion, dressed in some costume appropriate to the Passion and other plays, each with the warden and treasurer and supervisors. The other wardens and other office-bearers and the men of the company shall be required to gather in Santa Lucia at the service, and there they are to attire themselves devoutly in their habits which each one is to have at home before the day, and then, they shall come in procession with the crucifix to the Colosseum and arrange themselves in the place that the supervisors have prepared for them, and they are to stay there in silence for the whole Passion. And when it is finished, they are to return again in procession to Santa Lucia. Further, the wardens and the treasurer shall be required to organize a suitable supper for all the musicians and officials and other people who have assisted in the play in any function necessary for the stage, and not for anyone else, according to a list that shall be made by the warden who remains on stage in the Colosseum, with a similar procedure to be followed in the other plays. And in the Colosseum, when the Passion is finished, two of our members dressed in their habits are to keep watch with torches on a Crucifix, in the appointed place and decorated with our *pallium*, so that groups of people can go to the Crucifix for their devotions and offer alms.¹⁹

The Gonfalone plays are unique for this period in offering us an insight into the process of distributing and learning parts and stage-managing the performance. Given John McKinnell's chapter in this volume it is also appropriate to ask whether the Gonfalone confraternity viewed the Colosseum as a theatre and whether this shaped the way it used the space. There can be little doubt that the members of this Roman confraternity were in contact with the same humanists who were actively exploring theatrical architecture and practice. They were near neighbours of Cardinal Raffaele Riario to whom Giovanni Sulpizio da Veroli dedicated his edition of Vitruvius in 1485; the humanist historian Stefano Infessura was responsible for

¹⁹ Translated from Anna Esposito, 'Le "Confraternite" del Gonfalone (secoli XIV–XVI)', in *Le confraternite romane: esperienza religiosa, società, committenza artistica*, ed. by Luigi Fiorani, Ricerche per la storia religiosa di Roma, 5 (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1984), pp. 91–136 (p. 126). On the Roman plays, see Nerida Newbigin, 'The Decorum of the Passion: The Gonfalone Plays in the Colosseum, 1490 to 1539', in *Confraternities and the Visual Arts in the Italian Renaissance: Ritual, Spectacle, Image*, ed. by Barbara Wisch and Diane Cole Ahl (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 173–202. The Roman *provveditori* are the equivalents of the Florentine *festaiuoli*; the one *provveditore* who remains on stage has no expository role but acts rather as a marshall for the significant numbers of people on the acting space.

the play in 1493, and for massive cost overruns that required a special chapter in the new statutes of 1495; and Tommaso Inghirami, who chose to be called *Phaedra* for the rest of his life after his performance as a sixteen-year-old of Hippolyta in Seneca's *Phaedra*, was a tenant of the confraternity and by 1507 the immediate neighbour of Giuliano Dati, putative author of the rewritten text of 1496.²⁰ Except, however, for an unsuccessful rewriting of the Passion as a five-act tragedy (at the behest of Phaedra, so before his death in 1516), there is no documentary evidence to demonstrate that the confraternity considered its Passion and the performances in the Colosseum to be in some sense successors to classical theatre.²¹

The plays do, however, come to contain expository choruses, which appear for the first time in the printed edition of 1501. The confraternity of the Gonfalone resulted from the amalgamation of six older confraternities in 1486, and in 1490 it gained access to the Colosseum and some buildings on the podium level at the eastern end in order to mount its plays, which had previously been done at Santa Croce in Gerusalemme on Good Friday and at San Giovanni in Laterano on Easter Saturday, and perhaps elsewhere. The plays were rewritten in the Florentine style, with the Angel's prologue and *licenza*, by the Florentine priest and confraternity chaplain, Giuliano Dati, and the Passion was published in 1496 and quickly reprinted several times. In 1501, however, additions were made to it that immediately became indispensable, if infinitely mutable: four double choruses of Gentiles were added, commenting on events and, in the case of the Third Chorus, railing against the Jews and holding them responsible for the death of Christ:

Quando Iesus se mette in croce, el CHORO
DE' GENTILI *canta:*

O Dio, quanto giusto sei,
quanta invidia tu hai dato
sol per pena del peccato
de superbia alli Giudei.
Hor ad morte han condempnato
per invidia Iesù sancto,
che cason de grave pianto
li serà tal morte ancora.

When Jesus is put on the cross, the CHORUS OF
GENTILES *sings:*

O God, how just you are,
what envy you have given
to the Jews just as punishment
for their sin of pride.
Now in their envy they have condemned
holy Jesus to death,
and this death will be for them

632 a cause of lamentation forever.

²⁰ On these two figures, see Fabrizio Cruciani, 'Lo spettacolo classico dei pomponiani', in his *Teatro nel Rinascimento: Roma 1450–1550* (Rome: Bulzoni, 1983), pp. 219–25 (includes Latin text); 'Il teatro dei ciceroniani: Tommaso "Fedra" Inghirami', *Forum Italicum*, 14 (1980), 356–77.

²¹ These questions are discussed in more detail in Chapter 7 of my forthcoming study, with Barbara Wisch, *Acting on Faith: The Confraternity of the Gonfalone in Renaissance Rome*.

CHORUS:

Nolli par sia mai quel hora
 che Iesù sia in croce morto,
 non pensando el grave torto
 né de Dio l'offesa ancora.
 Pur che Iesù in croce mora,
 non se curan de giustitia.
 Iudei pieni di nequitia,
 de veneno, d'odio, e rabbia!

CHORUS:

They think the time will never come
 for Jesus to die on the cross,
 They give no thought to the great wrong
 nor to the harm they do to God.
 As long as Jesus dies on the cross
 they don't care about justice.
 O Jews, full of wickedness,

640 of venom, of hatred and rage.²²

There is no precedent for choruses in the late medieval tradition of Italian religious drama. The confraternity already employed singers in its churches and chapels. It may have used them to experiment in new modes, namely the use of the classical chorus. By the 1530s, we find an extraordinary mixture of sung and spoken parts: Christ, Mary, the single Apostles, Judas, and Satan speak their lines; the Patriarchs in Limbo, the Angels, the Pharisees (collectively but not individually), the Woman taken in adultery, the Woman of Cana, the Disciples (collectively but not individually), the Marys, the Centurion, Nicodemus, and the Choruses of Prophets and Sibyls all sing their parts. What began around 1501 as a small musical element by the late sixteenth century, when the play was no longer performed in the Colosseum but was circulating autonomously as a printed text, had become alternating choruses of Prophets and Sibyls, Shepherds or Patriarchs and Kings, and Virtues. The 1495 Statutes give us an idea of who and where the chorus was: members of the confraternity who were not actually in the play were required to dress in their confraternal habits and sit on the stage, flagellating and shouting 'Misericordia!' at appropriate moments. Such was the emotive power of the play and its choruses that after the Good Friday play of 1439, as the confraternity was returning from the Colosseum through the Jewish quarter (and subsequently the ghetto) to its oratory, violence erupted, leading Paul III to ban the plays in perpetuity.²³

Florence, meanwhile, accustomed to being the touchstone for Italian letters in prose and poetry from the time of Dante and Petrarch, and famed throughout Italy

²² My edition with translation of the Gonfalone *Lazarus*, *Passion*, and *Resurrection* plays is in preparation.

²³ Barbara Wisch, 'Memorie di teatro o rappresentazioni teatrali? Le rappresentazioni del Gonfalone nel Cinquecento e le scene "teatrali" del suo Oratorio', in *L'Oratorio del Gonfalone a Roma: Il ciclo cinquecentesco della Passione di Cristo*, ed. by Maria Grazia Bernardini (Milan: Silvana, 2002), pp. 51–59, and in particular pp. 53–54, where the author draws an important link between the opening of the Roman Monte di Pietà, on Maundy Thursday 1539, and the brawl the next day.

for the *ingegno* and *invenzione* of its *festaiuoli*,²⁴ found itself overtaken in all aspects of theatrical creativity by the courts of northern Italy and by papal Rome. After the expulsion of the Medici in 1494, the city was ruled with ascetic zeal, and when the Medici regained control of Florence in 1512 almost no working tradition remained of the old *sacre rappresentazioni*. Florentines had little experience of writing and performing in the new classicizing comedies in the vernacular, as Ariosto was already doing in Ferrara, and experimented instead with other comic modes. One of the earliest was an attempt to graft a new comic style onto the old *sacra rappresentazione*, as we find in the play of Abraham and Hagar, discussed by Baxandall.

The anonymous *Rappresentazione quando Abraam cacciò Agar sua ancilla con Ismael suo figliuolo* was first printed in the early years of the sixteenth century. Rather than being a late printing of a mid-fifteenth-century work that might be seen as analogous to Fra Filippo's painting, it is probably a new contribution of the genre, composed for the youth confraternity of San Giovanni Evangelista after the return of the Medici in 1512.²⁵ The play begins with a new kind of prologue: a *frottola* or farce of some four hundred *settenari*, in which a good son, Benedetto, and a bad son, Antonio, arrive with their father at the place where a play is to be performed and see 'a young man dressed like a *festaiuolo* bustling backwards and forwards'²⁶ (Fig. 4).

²⁴ The Florentine Niccolò Baroncelli was summoned to Reggio Emilia in 1453 to devise the machinery to lower St Peter and two angels to the stage in the cathedral where Borso d'Este was sitting; see Marialuisa Angiolillo, *Feste di corte e di popolo nell'Italia del primo Rinascimento* (Rome: SEAM, 1996), p. 50. For Easter 1473, Florentines were summoned to Rome by Pietro Riario, Cardinal of San Sisto and Archbishop-elect of Florence, to perform plays for Eleonora of Aragon as she passed through on her way to her marriage in Ferrara; for Easter Sunday 1475, Florentines were in Milan to prepare a play of the Resurrection; in 1476 in Ferrara, a Florentine directs a play of St James the More; see Newbigin, *Feste d'Oltrarno*, I, 138–44.

²⁵ SR, I, 1–39. The father says, 'E vo' che noi andiamo | a' fiesolani poggi | ch'io mi ricordo ch'oggi | una festa non vista | mai più il Vangelista | vi fa e rappresenta' (And I want us to go up to Fiesole because I remember that the [confraternity of the] Evangelist is doing and performing a play there today). The company of San Giovanni Evangelista had its meeting place in the parish of San Lorenzo, so it appears to have moved — perhaps to the Dominican Badia at Fiesole — for this performance. On the company, of which the newly elected Pope Leo X had been a member in his childhood, see Anna Evangelista, 'L'attività spettacolare della Compagnia di San Giovanni Evangelista nel Cinquecento', *Medioevo e rinascimento*, 18 / n.s. 15 (2004), 299–366. On the date of the surviving editions, see Cioni, IV.1–9, 72–73.

²⁶ SR, I, 10–13. The *frottola* also enjoyed an independent existence as *Frottola d'un padre che haveva dua figliuoli, un buono chiamato Benedetto, & l'altro cattivo chiamato Antonio*; see Carlo Angeleri, *Bibliografia delle stampe popolari a carattere profano*, Biblioteca Biografica Italiana, 2 (Florence: Sansoni, 1953), p. 41, no. 19. The woodcut of the *frottola* (see Fig. 4), also used as the frontispiece of one of the earliest editions, shows the Medici arms, with the six *palle* or roundels, between the words *Superbia* and *Umiltà*.



Figure 4. Woodcut of *Frottola d'un padre che haveua dua figliuoli, un buono chiamato Benedetto, & l'altro cattivo chiamato Antonio*, without typographical details, but Florence, early sixteenth century. Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, E.6.5.3.^{1.19}, fol. 1^r. By permission of the *Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali*.

They ask what the play is, and the *festaiuolo* fulfils the function of the old *Angelo che annunzia* by rehearsing the plot. But like the Prologue of a sixteenth-century comedy he also has some metatheatrical business: he rounds up the last actor, a *Gobbo* or hunchback who has arrived late, with the comment that ‘a chi par ben cantare | sempre si fa aspettare; | non e’ dicator buoni’ (the ones who think they’re good singers | always make you wait; | not the good actors). He concludes by calling for silence in the traditional way: ‘State in silenzio, e per premio io prometto | esempio, pace, amor, gaudio e diletto’ (Be silent, and in return I promise you | a moral, peace, love, joy, and delight). After this, he goes to sit down, returning only at the end, to be thanked by the father and his sons, now both reformed, and to invite all to sup with the actors.

The *frottola*, which D’Ancona compares to the *introitos* or *loas* of Spanish farces of the same decades of the sixteenth century, is nevertheless quite rare.²⁷ The *Frottola di tre suore* (*Frottola of Three Nuns*), known only in a nineteenth-century edition, appears to satirize its own generic nature while telling us much about performance modes in female convents.²⁸ Suor Giuditta is bustling around the acting space getting things ready for a play that the young nuns are about to perform. They had been planning to do the play of the *Re superbo* (first known in a manuscript copied in 1464–65),²⁹ but it’s gone to Viterbo; instead they are doing the *Alexus* play (first known from a performance in the Purification company, Carnival 1472),³⁰ and Suor Giuditta is organizing the staircase under which the saint will live for thirty years, when he returns as a beggar to his parental home. For two weeks she has been organizing costumes and dealing with temperamental actresses (and now with Suor Maria, illiterate and aware that she is not very bright, who has missed out on a part). Now she is putting placards on the various entrances to identify the places of the comedy. At the last moment Suor Orsola

²⁷ *Origini*, I, 381.

²⁸ Luigi Razzolini, ‘Frottola di tre suore’, *L’Etruria*, 2 (1852), 173–79. Razzolini does not give details of his manuscript source, which he dates to the fifteenth century; I believe, however, that this *frottola*, like the others, dates to some time after the return of the Medici.

²⁹ Published in *Sacre rappresentazioni del Quattrocento*, ed. by Luigi Banfi, 2nd edn (Turin: UTET, 1968), pp. 471–509. The 1462 manuscript is in Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, MS Conventi Soppressi F.3.488, fols 131^r–146^v; first known printed edition, c. 1530, see Cioni, LXXXVII.1, 259.

³⁰ See Newbiggin, ‘Word Made Flesh’, p. 368; and *Feste d’Oltrarno*, I, 140; first known printed edition 1517, see Cioni, VII.1, 81.

enters with a new set of placards. The young nuns have mutinied and the play is to be yet another, and the audience will find out what it is as the action unfolds.³¹

There is a vast amount of information here: that nuns could have a repertoire of plays that they knew by heart, and from half a century earlier, that they had costumes, both male and female, but almost nothing in the way of sets, and that scenes were identified only by *polizze* or notices. But the *frottola* is a one-size-fits-all comic prologue: Suor Orsola has no didactic or directorial role in the action that follows.

Vincenzo Borghini (1515–80), the congenial polymath and collaborator with Giorgio Vasari on Duke Cosimo de' Medici's court spectacles, observes in a notebook jotting from the middle of the century that it is neither polished nor entirely coherent, that the *frottola*, *Anton! Chi chiama?* marked a turning point in Florentine theatre.³² I shall conclude this chapter by discussing his note in some detail, because like Baxandall's assertion, Borghini's paragraph, never polished and never published, has had greater currency than it deserves and probably far more than its author intended.

According to Borghini, until *Anton! Chi chiama?*, which all the boys of his day knew by heart, the plays were (a) little more than narratives with different speaking parts, (b) lacking in any poetic or linguistic refinement, and (c) sung, 'fu recitata in canto'. Borghini then goes on to contrast the recitation of the *frottola* with the singing of the *festa* or *sacra rappresentazione* that it framed, and here we have significant problems of interpretation. On the one hand, it is possible that the *sacre rappresentazioni*, like the *cantari*, were performed in some kind of *cantilena* or singsong, and possibly even accompanied by the single-string viol that we see in illustrations that occasionally accompany the printed editions of the *cantari* (Fig. 5), although I have found no evidence of such a musician in the texts or in

³¹ The *Commedia o vero tragedia di Santa Teodora Vergine e Martire* (first known edition, Florence: [Giunti], 1554, and judging by the identification as 'comedy, or rather tragedy' certainly closer to mid-sixteenth century), begins with a *frottola* of two nuns boycotting the play that is about to start because they have not been given nice costumes. They are mollified with the promise of better costumes and go off to change as the prologue (no longer an angel) begins (*SR*, II, 324–28).

³² Borghini's paragraph is given, with a translation, as an Appendix below. On the transformation of the *sacra rappresentazione* in the sixteenth century, see D'Ancona, *Origini*, II, 61–162, Libro Terzo, Cap. II, 'Cause letterarie della decadenza della sacra rappresentazione. Risorgimento delle forme classiche. La sacra rappresentazione ne' conventi femminili.'



Figure 5. Woodcut of a *canterino*, in the guise of Orpheus, from *El contrasto dell'Acqua et del Vino con certe altre canzon bellissime* (Brescia: Damiano e Giacomo Filippo Turlini, sixteenth century). Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, E.6.5.3.¹⁷, fol. 4^v. By permission of the *Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali*.

the account books.³³ Borghini's assertion is supported, however, by the rubric at the end of the manuscripts of some of Belcari's *laude* in *ottava rima*, which give the melody as *Cantasi come le stanze d'Abramo* (to be sung to the tune of the Abraham stanzas). But withing Belcari's play, music is mentioned only in relation to the final *lauda*: *Tutta la famiglia di casa fa uno ballo tondo e canta questa laude essendo ciascuno accompagnato da uno angelo* (The entire household does a round-dance and sings this *lauda*, with each member accompanied by an angel). Following the *lauda* is a further note: *Cantasi come "O crocifixo che nel cel dimori", et come "Vivo per te, Signor, col cor sincero", et come "Amar non vo' te, mondo pien di guai"*.

³³ D'Ancona reports that in the late nineteenth century, when there was a dramatic element in the *cantare*, the parts were divided among two voices, and the violinist who accompanied the *cantastorie* provided the linking narrative (*Origini*, II, 36).

Dipoi danzano un poco honestamente et infine uno angelo licentia ogni uno dicendo la infrascripta istanza (To be sung to the tune of 'O crocifixo che nel cel dimori', and of 'Vivo per te, Signor, col cor sincero', and of 'Amar non vo' te, mondo pien di guai'. Then they dance chastely for a little while, and finally an angel bids everyone farewell, with the following stanza, rubric after line 510). There are clear indications throughout the entire *corpus* of moments when the mode of performance changes from 'normal' to singing, usually to sing a *lauda* to mark the passage of time in a journey from one place to another, or to mark a final celebration,³⁴ but Borghini seems to believe that the entire *corpus* was sung. He writes:

it is amazing to think how quickly that way of singing was abandoned, for there is no trace of it at all these days, except in one or two that have been performed, more on account of their technical excellence and their scenery than for their content, on the occasion of the visit of some great prince, like the Orciuolo Company's play [of the Annunciation], or the Sant'Agnese Company's play [of the Ascension].³⁵

These two plays of the Annunciation and the Ascension are perhaps the only ones that the adult Vincenzo knew at first hand. They were certainly among the most famous of the Florentine *feste* but quite different, in textual structure and performance mode, from the saints' lives performed in confraternities and squares in the mid-fifteenth century, and revived in youth confraternities and nunneries in the sixteenth century.³⁶ The confraternities responsible for them were adult hymn-singing confraternities, dedicated to Santa Maria delle Laude: there is a lot of singing, with angels, prophets, and sibyls, and jubilation in heaven, that has nothing to do with the singsong *cantilena* of the *cantari*.

Whatever the substance of Borghini's assertion about music, we cannot deny that performance modes changed when the *sacre rappresentazioni* were revived in the sixteenth century. In the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the boys' confraternities became major players in the theatrical life of the city. Men of letters produced 'spiritual comedies' for performance in the youth confraternities' own theatres; mothers-superior wrote and commissioned plays for the

³⁴ Florence, BNC, MS Magliabechiano VII.690, fols 118^v–119^r.

³⁵ Fol. 45^r (see Appendix).

³⁶ The Sant'Agnese company in the Carmine became the custodians of the Annunciation machinery in 1563, and Borghini and Vasari were responsible, with the *festaiuoli* appointed by Duke Cosimo, for using that machinery in the 1566 performance of the Annunciation in Santo Spirito on the occasion of Prince Francesco de' Medici's marriage to Johanna of Austria, the twelve-year-old daughter of the Emperor, Maximilian I. A further attempt to describe the *festa*, on fol. 47^r of this same notebook, suggests that the note dates to after 1566.

nuns; musicians composed oratorios for skilled and experienced singers. Few *sacre rappresentazioni* were written and performed in the old style after the second decade of the sixteenth century, but printing of the plays continued, without any interference from the inquisition. There was, however, a tension between the lavish, secular culture that embraced *commedia dell'arte*, *canti carnascialeschi*, and *commedia erudita* with increasingly grandiose *intermezzi*, and the closely controlled post-Tridentine confraternities and convents that wanted to be part of the new theatrical culture, with its sophisticated and witty wordplay, with its satire and humour, but without the licentiousness, obscenity, and immorality.³⁷ It is in these Counter-Reformation contexts, where the viewers are required to negotiate conflicting claims for their attention, rather than in the late medieval *sacre rappresentazioni*, that we find didactic characters directing the gaze.

³⁷ On plays in sixteenth-century confraternities, see Eisenbichler, *Boys of the Archangel Raphael*, Polizzotto, *Children of the Promise*, and Evangelista, 'L'attività spettacolare'; on plays in female convents, see Elissa Weaver, *Convent Theatre in Early Modern Italy: Spiritual Fun and Learning for Women* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

Appendix

Vincenzo Borghini, Taccuino, Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, MS II.X.116, fols 44^r–45^v

La lingua nostra non ha la commedia, non che e' non ce ne sia, che pur troppo ce n'è, et non le mancando le cose de l'arte, molto manco gli può mancar questo, che è quasi naturale. Ma io dico non l'havere poi che non ce n'è segnalate et che habbino preso autorità, come nelle prose et in altri poemi è avvenuto. Et quelli che hanno scritto non hanno scritto, con tutto il giuditio né con quella diligentia nella lingua che bisognava. Possiamo bene sperare che havendo havuto il medesimo successo che la commedia greca, possa col tempo venire al medesimo colmo et perfezione, et dico il medesimo progresso perché nel principio la nostra cominciò molto semplicemente et senza arte, et senza le sua parti, anzi era come un semplice ragionare [fol. 44^v] et contare un caso, una novella, o storia, non solo di più dì, ma di più tempi, e questo facevono in canto, che per un pezzo parve una bella cosa, ma questa dal havere interlocutori in fuori, non haveva parte alcuna di Commedia. Cominciossi dipoi a svegliare gli ingegni, et cerchare l'inventione, et qualche forma, o d'un bel successo o di qualche inventione ingegniosa, ma dettono nel principio nella vecchia Commedia, che loro chiamorno farsa. Et di queste se ne vede qualcuna ingegniosa del Bientina, del Araldo et di certi altri, ma il primo, mi vo' ricordare, che levassi via il canto, fu l'Araldo, in quella che tutti i fanciulli del mio tempo sapevano a mente, "Anton! Chi chiama?" benché la festa, come la chiamavano, fu pure recitata in canto, ma quel principio fu recitato a parole, et parve nel principio cosa strana, pur fu gustata, appoco appoco, et messa in uso [fol. 45^r] et è cosa mirabile a pensare, quanto quel modo del cantare si lasciassi in un tratto, che non se n'è vedute ne' tempi nostri alcuna che excetto che una o due che più per l'artificio et apparato che per la materia alla venuta di qualche gran principe si sono recitate, come quella della Compagnia dell'Orciuolo o della Agnesa.

A' tempi nostri poi sono stati belli ingegni i quali parte imitando da' Latini, come havevon fatto loro da' Greci, parte trovando di proprio ingegno, hanno ridotto la Commedia in tutte le sue parti a buona perfetione, ma nel parlare ha hauto pur quel difetto che io ho detto di sopra, et da questo si può vedere, la natura delle cose essere la medesima, et in diversi tempi operare i medesimi effetti, non obstando la varietà del tempo, alla natura che è la medesima; et si vede ancora che la lingua nostra ha la poesia naturale che se bene habbiano hauti i Latini inanzi et da [fol. 45^v] loro imparare la commedia, non dimeno è nata et allevata fra noi di sua natura, cosa che non intervenne a' Latini che la presono da' Greci di colta.

[Our language [Florentine] has no comedy, not that there isn't any, because there is even too much, and not because it lacks the necessary skills, because comedy is natural and more rarely is it absent. But I say that that it has none since none have been recorded, and have become the standard authority as happened with prose and poetry. And those that have written [plays] have not written with that discernment nor with the diligent care for language that was necessary. We can hope that if it follows the same path as Greek comedy it may in time reach the same height and perfection, and I say the same progress, because in the beginning our [drama] began very simply and artlessly, and without all the normal attributes, but rather it was simply telling and relating something that had happened, a tale or a story, not just over a few days but over longer periods, and they did this in song, and for a while it seemed good, but apart from having various interlocutors, it could in no way be called Comedy. Then men of intellect began to stir and to seek innovation, and some form that would succeed or that would contain some ingenious innovation, but their first attempts were with the old kinds of plays, which they called farce. And the first we saw of these were some ingenious attempts by [Jacopo da] Bientina, and [Giovanni dell'Otonaio] the Herald [of the Signoria] and certain others, but the first, as I remember, to get rid of singing, was the Herald, in the one that all the boys in my day knew by heart, that is, 'Anton! Chi chiama?', although the *fiesta*, as they called it, was indeed sung, but that beginning part was recited, and in the beginning it seemed very strange, but people came to like it and gradually it became normal and it is amazing to think how quickly that way of singing was abandoned, for there is no trace of it at all these days, except in one or two that have been performed, more on account of their technical excellence and their scenery than for their content, on the occasion of the visit of some great prince, like the Orciuolo Company's play [of the Annunciation], or the Sant'Agnese Company's play [of the Ascension].

In our present day [the 1560s] now there have been some fine writers who in part borrowing from the Romans, as they had done borrowing from the Greeks, and in part working with their own imagination, have brought Comedy back to its perfect structure, but in its language it still has some defects as I have indicated above. And in this one can see that the nature of things can be the same, and in different times they can produce the same effects, notwithstanding the differences in the times, on nature which remains the same; and one can also see that our language has natural poetry, and even if they had the Romans before them and learnt comedy from them, nonetheless it was born and raised among us with its own character, which didn't happen with the Romans who acquired it from the Greeks already in full bloom.]

THE NARRATOR AS EVERYONE'S VOICE: A PROJECT TO PRODUCE THE *ECERINIS* OF ALBERTINO MUSSATO

John McKinnell

It seems probable that for much of the Middle Ages, classical Latin tragedy, unlike Latin comedy, was read but not performed. This may be largely because of the hostility towards classical theatre expressed by the church fathers. Isidore of Seville, for example, states baldly that tragedies used to narrate the deaths of wicked kings:

Tragoedi sunt qui antiqua gesta atque facinora sceleratorum regum luctuosa carmine spectante populo concinebant.¹

[Tragedies are those (plays) in which they used to narrate the ancient deeds and crimes of wicked kings in mournful song before the watching people.]

He adds that good Christians ought to hate the theatre, partly because it was conducive to sin, but mainly because it had its origins in worship of the heathen gods:

Quod spectaculum, Christiane, odere debes, quorum odisti auctores.²

[You, Christian, ought to hate this kind of show, just as you hate the originators of it.]

It is probably also significant that, although he is writing at a very early period (around the year 620), Isidore consistently describes the classical theatre as a phenomenon of the past.

¹ Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiarum sive originum libri XX*, ed. by W. M. Lindsay, 2 vols, 2nd edn (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1931), XVIII, chapter 45.

² Isidore, *Etymologiae*, XVIII, chapter 51.

The Historical Materials

In the early fourteenth century learned interest in Seneca's tragedies revived strongly, especially in Italy. At some time between 1308 and 1321, the English Dominican friar Nicholas Trevet published a highly influential commentary on them at the request of Nicholas de Albertinis, Cardinal Archbishop of Ostia and Velletri (died 1321).³ Trevet begins his discussion of the *Hercules Furens* with a description of how Roman tragedies were performed. This is influenced by Isidore but is free of his constant tone of condemnation. For example, Isidore's description of the subject-matter of tragedy as 'facinora sceleratorum regum' (crimes of wicked kings) is quoted, but Trevet's own description of *materia tragica* is that it is 'de casu regum et magnorum virorum et de rebus publicis' (about the falls of kings and great men and about affairs of state).

Trevet notes that Seneca's work is unlike that of Virgil (which he also regards as tragic in character) in that the poet never speaks in his own voice; the speeches are only those of the characters who have been introduced. Nonetheless, it is clear that he regards the *poeta* as having been the sole reciter:

Et nota quod tragedie et comedie solebant in theatro hoc modo recitari: theatrum erat area semicircularis, in cuius medio erat parva domuncula, que scena dicebatur, in qua erat pulpitu[m] super quod poeta carmina pronuntiabat; extra vero erant mimi, qui carminum pronuntiationem gestu corporis effigiabant per adaptionem ad quemlibet ex cuius persona loquebatur.⁴

[And note that tragedies and comedies used to be recited in the theatre in the following way: the theatre was a semicircular area in the middle of which there was a small building called the *scena*, within which there was a pulpit from which the poet pronounced the verse speeches. Outside it were the actors, who depicted what was being said in the verses by bodily gestures adapted to whichever character was speaking.]

Trevet (or one of the scholars from whom he drew his material) had probably seen the physical remains of one or more Roman theatres, but he misunderstands the performance of classical tragedy in a number of ways. One of these is his belief that the action took place in the semicircular area between the actual stage and the audience. This would be a natural mistake for a medieval observer to make. The stages of Roman theatres were made of wood, which must have decayed or been

³ *L. Annaei Senecae Hercules Furens et Nicolai Treveti Expositio*, ed. by V. Ussani (Rome: Athenei, 1959). Ussani's Preface gives Trevet's commentary the terminal dates 1308–21 and a probable date c. 1315.

⁴ *L. Annaei Senecae Hercules Furens et Nicolai Treveti Expositio*, ed. by Ussani, p. 5.

removed long before the medieval period, leaving only the brick pillars on which the stage was supported. Even with modern knowledge it takes a real effort of the imagination to see this as a possible acting area. More importantly for the present study, Trevet's other large misconception is that the lines of the tragedy were all spoken by a reading narrator, while the other actors merely mimed their roles. For one who also regarded Virgil's *Aeneid* as a tragedy (as Dante also does when he makes the character of Virgil refer to his own work as 'L'alta mia tragedia' (my high tragedy) in *Inferno* XX, 112–14),⁵ this is perhaps not surprising; its immediate effect is to blur the distinction between drama on the one hand and epic poetry that includes dialogue on the other.

Two early manuscripts of Trevet's work are particularly interesting. One is Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS Urb. lat. 355, which was made for Count Federico I da Montefeltro, Count of Urbino, at some time in or before 1322.⁶ This contains a frontispiece illustration of a performance of *Hercules Furens* as visualized by Trevet which is valuable in its own right, since it includes some details that cannot be derived either from Seneca's text or from Trevet's commentary. In one respect, the illustrator probably misunderstands Trevet. Isidore makes it clear that the *scena* contained both the reciting poet and the actors, and when Trevet uses the word *extra* (outside), he probably means merely that the actors were outside the pulpit. But the illustrator takes him to mean that they were outside the *scena*, and so makes the *domuncula* just big enough to hold the poet and his lectern and book, with the actors and chorus filling the rest of the open-air semicircular space of the *theatrum*. But the Urbino frontispiece also shows two features that are probably derived from independent observation of the site of at least one Roman theatre. These are the people watching on grassy slopes round the edge of the semicircle, and the literal presence of three naked white furies in a small space behind the *poeta*. The latter look more like statues than actors, and they may reflect knowledge of the grotesque carved masks that are to be found at the back of the stage area in some Roman theatres (e.g. at Ostia antica).

The other interesting early manuscript is Padua, Padua University Library, MS 896, which is reckoned to be among the earliest manuscripts of Trevet's commen-

⁵ Dante Alighieri, *La Divina Commedia*, ed. by G. A. Scartazzini, 2nd edn, rev. by Luigi Polacco (Milan: Hoepli, 1896), p. 194; Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy: Inferno*, trans. by Mark Musa, 3 vols (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971), I, 254.

⁶ John McKinnell, 'Significant Gestures: Two Medieval Illustrations of Classical Theatre', in *Porci ante Margaritam: Essays in Honour of Meg Twycross*, ed. by Sarah Carpenter, Pamela King, and Peter Meredith, special issue, *Leeds Studies in English*, n.s., 32 (2001), 289–320 (pp. 289–95).

tary, and which bears no indication that it has ever been anywhere other than at Padua. At about the same time as Trevet was writing, Albertino Mussato of Padua (1261–1329) produced the first ‘modern’ attempt at a quasi-classical tragedy. This is his Latin play *Ecerinis*, which covers the career of the tyrant Ezzelino III, who had been killed in 1259 after a reign of terror that had lasted for more than twenty years. The play may have been intended to warn the Padovani against Cangrande della Scala, who had begun to threaten the independence of Padua in 1314; Cangrande actually gained control of the city in 1328, by which time Mussato had been driven into exile. The play was performed with such success that in 1318 the senate of the city of Padua decreed that it should be ‘recited’ every year, in order to remind the citizens of the need to be vigilant in defending their liberty.⁷ The word ‘recited’, the contemporary consensus about the manner of performance of Seneca’s tragedies, and the presence in Padua of one of the earliest manuscripts of Trevet’s commentary all suggest that *Ecerinis* was probably written with the intention that it should be performed in the manner described by Trevet.

The Project

Despite its great (if short-lived) success in its own day and its importance to the history of tragedy, Mussato’s play is almost unknown today, even in Italy. This is hardly surprising: after all, it is in Latin verse, and its stylized, melodramatic action seems the antithesis of much that is central in modern theatre. In addition to that, any ‘authentic’ production of it must clearly rely heavily on a narrating *poeta*, who according to the Urbino miniature (and to other medieval representations of classical drama, like that of Terence’s *Andria* in Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS Vat. lat. 3305, fol. 8^v)⁸ should read the text aloud from a large book.

But can *Ecerinis* now be accessible only to the few scholars who can read it in Latin, and among those to the even fewer who have the visual and aural imagination to ‘see’ a performance of it in the mind’s eye? Durham Medieval Theatre Company are hoping to mount a production of it in the hope of testing the effectiveness or otherwise of this unfamiliar mode of performance. The purpose of this note is to describe the methods we propose to use (with particular reference to the

⁷ Ezio Franceschini, *Studi e note di Filologia Latina Medievale*, Serie IV. 30 (Milan: Pubblicazioni dell’ Università Cattolica del sacro Cuore, 1938–46), pp. 14–15.

⁸ For an illustration, see McKinnell, ‘Significant Gestures’, p. 310.

unusual role of the Narrator), to provide verifiable evidence before the event of the aims of the project against which subsequent experience can be evaluated, and to invite further debate about the role of reconstructive productions in general.

Setting and Language

Performance of this play obviously requires a semicircular amphitheatre, but such spaces are not uncommon, although one has to find one that is not too large to be practically usable. We intend to use the one at Collingwood College, Durham.

Language and metre present larger problems. It is somewhat surprising that the play is in Latin. The decree that it should be recited annually is explained by the need for the citizens of Padua to be reminded of their military and civic responsibility to defend the liberty of their city. This suggests an original audience that was mainly secular, since this was not a responsibility that fell to churchmen. Padua in the early fourteenth century was a major centre of learning where it was evidently possible to attract a reasonably large and prestigious secular audience who could understand Latin. But even then, this was probably rare outside major university cities, and today it would be impossible even in the most traditional university, either in Italy or elsewhere. It is therefore essential to begin by producing a suitable translation of the play into modern English.

Translations into English prose already exist, but they are unusable.⁹ *Ecerinis*, like Seneca's tragedies, is in rather formal verse, and it relies on this for much of its rhetorical dignity. We shall therefore translate the major dramatic sections into flexible blank verse pentameters, which are familiar to English audiences through performances of Shakespearean tragedy and correspond well enough to the five-footed line of Seneca's verse. For example:

NUNCIUS: Sed, O maleficis digna permittens Deus
Supplicia, meriti nobiles primi luunt;
Qui vendidere, scelera iam expendunt sua. (lines 225–27)

⁹ See Albertino Mussato, *The Tragedy of Ecerinis*, ed. and trans. by Robert W. Carrubba and others (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Classics Department, 1972) and Joseph R. Berrigan in Albertino Mussato, *Ecerinis*, ed. by L. Padrin, Humanistische Bibliothek, Reihe 2, Texte, Bd. 17 (Munich: Fink, 1975). I have not yet been able to make use of the latter. See also Hubert Müller, *Früher Humanismus in Oberitalien: Albertino Mussato: 'Ecerinis'*, Studien zur klassischen Philologie, 31 (Berne: Lang, 1987). Müller includes a translation into German prose after his edition of the Latin text (see his pp. 177–97), as well as a brief description of the metres used by Mussato (p. 199).

[MESSENGER: When God allows the wicked to be punished
nobles are rightly first to pay their debt:
those who sold Padua pay now for their crimes.]

The Chorus speeches at the end of each act are in a variety of shorter, more lyrical metres, often including end-rhyme or assonance, and these clearly demand lighter metrical handling in English, with a semi-stanzaic organization of the lines. For example:

CHORUS: Illos tollimus altius,
Hos deponimus infimos:
Leges iuraque condimus,
Post haec condita scindimus.
Nobis retia tendimus,
Mortale auxilium demus,
Falsum praesidium sumus.
Haec demum iugulis luunt:
Nos secum miseri trahunt,
Nos secum cadimus; cadunt.
Sic semper rota volvitur,
Durat perpetuum nichil. (lines 136–47)

[CHORUS: Some men we raise aloft,
others we make fall;
we set up laws and rights,
and then we break them all.
The help we offer others
spreads nets before their way:
at last, when throats are being cut
our protégés must pay.
They drag us down, the wretches,
and as they fall, we fall;
the wheel is always turning,
and nothing lasts perpetually at all.]

No translation can be culturally the same thing as its original, but we hope to convey a sufficient sense of rhetorical balance and moral seriousness to give a good idea of the style of Mussato's verse.

The Play and its Audience

It is equally impossible to reproduce the attitudes of a medieval audience, and any producer of a modern reconstructive production must accept his or her role as 'translator' in a second sense. We may reasonably try to give modern audiences

some limited sense of the theatrical experiences of the past, but we must accept that our productions will never *be* authentic medieval performances. That, however, is no reason not to try to convey the spirit and methods of early drama as far as possible. The director's alternative — to 'update' plays by playing them with deliberate anachronism or seeking modern analogies to their situations — often leads to deliberate or accidental distortion of their values. For example, where modern agnostic producers impose a view of God in the York *Doomsday* as merely vengeful, or of Five Wits in *Everyman* as an idiot because he believes in the sacramental power of the priesthood, they are not illuminating the plays but indulging in a kind of historical imperialism.¹⁰ The scholar's alternative, which maintains that it is better to have no productions at all than to make do with imperfectly 'authentic' ones, is even worse, for it denies the plays any existence at all in the medium within which they belong, namely performance. We shall therefore proceed in the belief that, while our reconstructions are bound to be imperfect, they are better than systematic distortion, or than nothing at all.

All the same, one must take note of unavoidable cultural differences. The story of Ezzelino cannot have the relevance to modern English audiences that it had for fourteenth century Padovani, whose city had been plundered and terrorized by him. They were, after all, closer to his reign of terror than we are to the Second World War. Nonetheless, the play's discussion of how it is possible for a just God to allow the atrocities of a tyrant remains as relevant today as it was then, even if we may no longer take it as axiomatic that there is a God, just or otherwise.

The Shape of the Play

Each act of *Ecerinis* is different in mood and approach from the others, almost as if the play were an anthology of different genres. The question of how the play should be produced therefore divides into six separate questions: one for each act, and the overall question of how the acts can be effectively related to each other. The role of the Narrator is pivotal in all of them.

¹⁰ An example of the first was Handmade Performance's production of the York *Doomsday* at Toronto in 1998 (although the director's intention was apparently to find 'post-modern analogies', see Stephen Johnston, 'Historical Text and the Postmodern Aesthetic: Case Study of Handmade Performance's *The Last Judgement*', *Early Theatre: A Journal Associated with the Records of Early English Drama*, 3 (2000), 259–74 (pp. 260–64)); the second was a feature of the otherwise effective Royal Shakespeare Company production of *Everyman* in 1996 (*Everyman*, production programme, Stratford-upon-Avon: Royal Shakespeare Company, 1996).

Act I contains an explanation of the origins of evil which now seems curiously melodramatic, and which even in the medieval period was the stuff of romance rather than of history. According to his mother Adelheita, Ezzelino was not the son of any human father, but of a devil who raped her; she is unsure whether his younger brother Alberico is the result of a second, similar rape, or whether this is merely something she has dreamed. The motif of the protagonist who is the son of a devil also appears in the English romance *Sir Gowther* (as in many other European sources), but unlike Ezzelino, who glories in his origin and dedicates his life to the service of his infernal father, Gowther eventually overcomes his origins and becomes a good Christian.¹¹ Evil, as every medieval Christian knew, proceeds from the misuse of free will, not from our parentage. We expect that the effect of Act I may be to allow our audience to feel a comfortable modern superiority to this faintly comic explanation of the tyrant, and we shall encourage this feeling by playing the act as melodrama with a faintly comic edge. But this is not a betrayal of the values of the original, because it was not really a serious explanation in Mussato's own time, and the ambiguity about the paternity of Alberico underlines this fact by suggesting that *all* such stories may result from the dreams of disturbed women. The speech by the Chorus which closes Act I relates tyranny to human sinfulness, and this, as is usual with the Chorus, probably represents the commonly accepted opinion in Mussato's time.

Act II is a narrative, presented through the reminiscences of a messenger who recalls Ezzelino's rise to power during the thirty years up to 1237, when by a mixture of bribery and terror he took control of Padua from his base in Verona. This produces a quite different and much more modern and pragmatic explanation of the origins of tyranny — it is produced by quarrels, treachery, and civil war between noblemen who are too hungry for power or revenge. These things have allowed Ezzelino to set his rivals against each other and eliminate them one by one, until no possible alliance remained that was strong enough to oppose him.

¹¹ *Sir Gowther*, ed. by Maldwyn Mills in *Six Middle English Romances* (London: Dent, 1973), pp. 148–68. *Sir Gowther* lines 202–49 contains a scene in which, as in *Ecerinis*, the protagonist's mother tells him that his father was a fiend, but whereas Gowther has behaved like his father's son up to that point, he then repents as a result of what she has told him; Ezzelino, by contrast, only begins his demonic career after discovering his parentage and deciding to glory in it. It therefore seems possible that Act I of *Ecerinis* is partly based on a romance source, whose conclusion may have been reversed in order to satirize the historical tyrant. For an account of this motif in various European romances, see H. Schelp, *Exemplarisches Romanzen im Mittelenglischen* (Göttingen: Palaestra, 1967).

The dominance of the speaking Narrator produces problems for the portrayal of characters like the Messenger and the Chorus, who have no action of their own within the plot, and these will be discussed in the section on Questions to Be Answered below. Some directors might be tempted to react to such problems by emphasizing modern political comparisons, and the very fact that such analogies can be drawn suggests that the play still has something to say to us. But in my view, audiences are intelligent enough to think of these parallels for themselves without Ezzelino being made up to look like Saddam Hussein or the Messenger wearing a flak jacket and impersonating a BBC news reporter. Besides, we should remain conscious that in some ways, then was different from now. Whereas a modern audience would probably ask how the tyrant's cruelty can be stopped in practical terms, the Chorus within the play reacts with the anguished question how God can continue to allow such atrocities.

Act III is the symmetrical centre of the play. It begins with a scene in which Ezzelino plans further conquests with Alberico (which in his imagination span the whole world), and ends with another in which he is told of the loss of Padua and begins furious preparations for an attempt to reconquer it. In the middle of this pattern of flow and ebb in his military fortunes, there is a scene of philosophical debate. Ezzelino's half-brother Ziramonte has just reported how, on the tyrant's orders, he has murdered the Paduan nobleman Monaldo and left his head lying in the public square. At this point a friar called Frate Luca enters, tells Ezzelino that God remains just, and urges the tyrant to change his ways. Ezzelino asks why, if God sees what he is doing and could stop him at any time, He is so slow to do so, and Luca replies that God is waiting for him to amend. Ezzelino then asks why his own salvation is more important to God than the lives of a multitude of others, and puts forward his own view (which curiously foreshadows that of Marlowe's *Tamburlaine*): God has sent him to punish the sins of the world. For the time being, this argument seems quite convincing, but before Frate Luca can reply, a Messenger arrives to announce the loss of Padua, and we are left to reflect that if Ezzelino is right, then he can hardly complain if others are sent by God to punish *his* sins. The act ends with a lament by the Chorus which gives graphic details of Ezzelino's cruel revenges against individual Padovani after his loss of their city.

Our planned approach to Act III will be to emphasize the parallels between the military scenes with which it begins and ends, and to contrast both with the calm atmosphere of the moral debate which forms the centre of the act, and of the whole play. Once again, in a situation which relies on verbal rhetoric rather than on action, the relation between the miming debaters and the Narrator who speaks

the words of both of them will require careful thought (see the section on The Narrator Himself under Questions to Be Answered, below).

Act IV begins with a brief dramatic scene of Ezzelino's defiance before his final campaign, but this is immediately followed by the arrival of the Messenger, who narrates the tyrant's fall at the Battle of Cassano. Wounded and captured, Ezzelino refused food and medical treatment, soon died, and willingly entered hell. The Chorus rejoices and urges those who have sinned to do penance. The situation here resembles the optimistic conclusions of Shakespeare's *Richard III* and *Macbeth*, and at this point we hope that familiarity with these plays may encourage our audience to conclude that a just resolution has been reached.

But that is not Mussato's final view. Act V, in which the Messenger enthusiastically relates the deaths of Alberico and his family after the fall of their fortress at San Zenone, looks at first like an anticlimax, but it brings the play to a thought-provoking if uneasy end. The Messenger tells how Alberico's son was butchered and beheaded, and how Alberico was bound and gagged and forced to watch the protracted burning of his wife and five daughters before he himself was torn limb from limb by the vengeful crowd. The Chorus ends the play with a reflection on divine justice, but the tone of Act V leads to the unavoidable conclusion that those who seek a bloody revenge for tyranny are little better than the tyrant himself. The soldier who kills Alberico's son is even referred to as 'Ecerinis [...] novus' (a new Ezzelino, line 555), and there is a disturbing suggestion that cruelty and violence are self-perpetuating — another idea that can hardly fail to find resonances in the world we live in today. It is a conclusion that undermines the comfortable, self-satisfied tone of the end of Act IV. Again, the relationship between Messenger and Narrator will be crucial to its realization, but it will be necessary to find some difference of approach between the two acts (both of which are basically narrative), in order to underline their contrasting ideological conclusions.

Questions to Be Answered

Speech and Character

The first question to be addressed by our production will be whether the presentation of tragedy through narration and mime can still be relevant and meaningful today, despite cultural differences. We shall also experiment during rehearsals to consider how the effect will change if each actor is allowed to speak in his or her own character at moments of particular emotional importance: will this produce heightened emotion, or does it dilute the power of the narrating voice? Since

decisions on these matters will have to be taken before actual public performance, we shall rely on the verdicts of the 'select audience' made up by other members of our larger company. Unlike the public audience, who will typically see the play only once, they will get to know it very well and will become the most informed audience we are likely to have, so their evaluative role will be very important. Their experience of seeing the play many times will also provide the nearest modern approximation to the situation of audiences in early fourteenth-century Padua, who may have seen the play every year.

We expect that those characters who have a clear individual role (such as Ezzelino, Adelheita, and Frate Luca) should be reasonably straightforward for the miming actors to portray, though exact timing and acting style will present some technical problems. The miming actor almost inevitably uses stylized gesture, and the frontispiece illustration to Seneca's *Hercules Furens* in the Urbino manuscript illustrates this well. It also suggests that characters were not masked in early fourteenth-century performance (not even the goddess Juno).

The script gives no indication of which characters are on stage except when they 'speak', so we shall also have to consider how long each one should remain present when he or she has nothing to say. It may also be relevant to consider what 'being on stage' represents. Some such questions are easily answered; for example, Adelheita cannot be on stage after the end of Act I, since Act II takes place many years after her death. But in other cases varying decisions are possible. For instance, in Act III one might either concentrate attention on the debate between Ezzelino and Frate Luca by having them alone on stage together, or remind the audience of Frate Luca's courage by keeping the menacing figures of Ziramonte and his soldiers hovering in the background. Similarly, Frate Luca could exit after Ezzelino's reply to his last speech, suggesting that with the revolt of the Padovani the possibility of repentance has passed, or he could remain as a silent, sorrowing figure as Ezzelino and his men react to the revolt with further violence. In many cases, it may be that the most effective moments for entries and exits may coincide with the beginnings and ends of acts, but this will have to be tested by experience; again, we shall use the reactions of other members of the cast as if they were 'audience'.

As in many classical tragedies, violent actions are reported by a messenger. Mussato's Messenger is opinionated enough to have a definite character of his own, but the fact that his narrative dominates three of the five acts raises the question whether there might be a 'second level' of mime, in which at least some of the events he describes are ritually enacted behind him. The presence of the Furies in the Urbino illustration and the fact that the figure of Amphitruon

appears twice in it (illustrating different scenes in the *Hercules Furens*) suggests that more than one level of dramatic fiction may be present at once, and hence that such secondary miming may have been possible. On the other hand, if the Messenger is not speaking his lines and the action of 'his' speeches is represented partly by secondary mime, much of his role may be in danger of seeming redundant. If one were to show the capture of Ezzelino actually taking place, with the Narrator speaking the lines and the miming actors portraying the action, the miming Messenger might become no more than an unfocused distraction. This, too, will be tested in rehearsal, and we may experiment with 'breaking the rules' by allowing the excited Messenger to seize temporary control of the power of speech for part of Act V (and thus to become, like Ezzelino, a usurper of rightful authority). If this is done, however, it will be necessary to the argument of the play for him to hand control back to the narrating *poeta* before the action reaches its gruesome end.

More difficult questions about the nature of mime arise when we consider the role of the Chorus, which as in many classical tragedies has an important function in *Ecerinis*. Trevet separates the Chorus from the *personae*, the individualized characters within the action, and the Urbino frontispiece places the individual characters in the upper half of the semicircular acting area and the Chorus in the lower half, with what looks like some sort of symbolic barrier between them. The seven Chorus members are depicted as alternately men and women, and are holding each others' hands so that only the two outside men have any gestures. The left hand of the man on the left-hand end is held in front of him in a listening gesture, while the right hand of the man on the right-hand end is held up in a gesture of lamenting prayer which echoes that used by Amphitruon and Megera in the upper half of the acting area. Trevet says of the Chorus:

ideo Seneca in suis tragediis, ad representandum tales rumores et talia iudicia populi, interpolatim introducit chorum de talibus canentem.¹²

[therefore Seneca in his tragedies introduces a Chorus singing about such things, in order to represent such rumours and popular judgements.]

The Chorus serves as the voice of popular opinion, but since it does not have any part in the plot, it is difficult to see what mimetic role it has if all its lines are spoken by the Narrator. As in Seneca's tragedies, its speeches are in various lyric metres, and we propose to use them as the musical aspect of the performance. We hope that the fact that they sing (possibly as a choir conducted by the Narrator?)

¹² *L. Annaei Senecae Hercules Furens et Nicolai Treveti Expositio*, ed. by Ussani, pp. 29–30.

will act as another convention, balancing that of the Narrator speaking the lines of the individual characters. Such an arrangement may also provide an explanation for the alternating men and women in the frontispiece illustration to the Urbino manuscript of Trevet's commentary: if the role of the Chorus was at least partly musical, and polyphonic, it would become necessary to use women (or boys with unbroken voices dressed as women) to sing the top parts.

However, this idea will not do for all the Chorus speeches, for in addition to their lyric reflections at the end of each act, it is also used occasionally to interrogate the Messenger in Acts II, IV, and V. For example:

CHORUS: Procede: Redeas unde coepisti prius.
Sermone cur nos anxios dudum tenes?
Quae nova?

NUNTIUS: Nova audietis et finem statim.¹³

[CHORUS: Go on! Get back to where you first began!
Why do you keep us waiting anxiously?
What's new?

MESSENGER: You'll hear it all quite soon enough!]

In lines like these, the Chorus (or perhaps one member of it) seems to be used as a minor character within the main action, and therefore these lines should probably be spoken by the Narrator. One or more members of the Chorus will then mime their reactions to the messenger's speech (in this case, exasperation about the length of time he is taking to get to the point).

Time and Place

Aristotle's *Poetics* was almost unknown in the fourteenth century, and Mussato shows no concern for the dramatic unities of time and space, though he does observe unity of action in *Ecerinis*, in the sense that there is a single action with no sub-plots.

The action of the tragedy covers a period of nearly fifty years: Act I takes place before the death of Ezzelino's mother Adelheita in 1214. In Act II the Messenger summarizes nearly thirty years of Ezzelino's life, but has come to tell the Chorus about his conquest of Padua in 1237. Act III begins after the fall of Padua, and at the beginning of scene 2 we hear of the murder of Monaldo in 1239, but the end of the debate that follows is interrupted by the arrival of the Messenger to report

¹³ *Ecerinis*, lines 203–05, ed. by Müller, p. 121.

the loss of Padua in 1256. Act IV relates the death of Ezzelino in 1259 and Act V those of Alberico and his family in 1260. We expect that the presence of a continuous story-line will make the audience accept the long fictional time-span of the play. Indeed, they may accept it so readily that it goes completely unnoticed, and in this case it may be desirable to take some steps to remind the audience of it. For example, we may consider using children to play the parts of Ezzelino and Alberico in Act I, to give the appearance of the adult tyrant and his brother in Act III more shock effect. On the other hand, it will also be necessary to bear in mind the different time frame occupied by the narrating *poeta*, who is presumably to be seen as reciting the play in response to the command of the Paduan senate *c.* 1318. On this level, unity of time is preserved, simply because the modern performance alludes to its medieval predecessors and takes about the same length of time to play as they did.

Locations in the play are vague. It seems to be assumed that the Chorus are citizens of Padua, and the Narrator (who is fictionally the *poeta* Mussato) must also be supposed to be there, although at a different time (the 'now' of the author and his audience, *c.* 1318). Otherwise, indications of place are vague and sometimes contradictory. Thus in Act I, scene 1, Adelheita may be assumed to be living at the family's ancient seat at Castel Romano, but she rather curiously describes it to her sons as if it were a place they did not know. One tends not to notice this inconsistency simply because it is a suitably vivid setting for the rape scene, and thus acts powerfully on the imagination of the audience. Alongside this, the fact that Ezzelino and his brother must have been quite familiar with Castel Romano seems an irrelevance. The action of Act II is presumably placed in Padua, but in Act III Ezzelino has repeatedly to be told what is happening there (the murder of Monaldo and the military loss of the city), so he is clearly somewhere else. We might guess that he is at his power base in Verona, but the important point is that Mussato needs him to be somewhere other than in Padua in order to tell the audience what is happening there. Again, the requirements of the narrative take precedence over unity of place. We expect that audiences will accept this without analysing it too deeply, although I propose to put the question of place to members of the company in the course of rehearsals, and see what consensus emerges about the location(s) of each act.

The Narrator Himself

It seems clear from many medieval illustrations of reading narrators that the use of stylized gestures often extended to the Narrator himself as well as the miming

actors. In the Urbino miniature, the *poeta* raises his right index finger in a gesture of moral instruction.¹⁴ In that of Terence's *Andria* in MS Vat. lat. 3305,¹⁵ the reader Calliopius (Terence's patron) keeps the place in his book with his right index finger and points towards his protégé with his left, thus pointing out the unusual fact that because of his lowly status as a freedman, Terence was not allowed, as *poeta*, to narrate or introduce his plays himself. In Jean Fouquet's famous miniature of the martyrdom of St Apollonia, the director/*poeta* holds the book in his left hand, while his right wields a white stick like a conductor's baton, with which he points out the actors whose turn it is to 'speak' (whether the words are actually being spoken by them or by him).¹⁶ Miniatures in late medieval poetic manuscripts also often show the *poeta* using gesture as he reads his work aloud; for example, Salter and Pearsall reproduce three different illustrations from manuscripts of Deguileville's *Pelerinage de la Vie Humaine* which show a clerical *poeta* using the same gesture, stretching out both hands towards his audience in what looks like an appeal to them to repent of their sins.¹⁷

But one of the things that manuscripts cannot usually tell us is whether the *poeta* used gesture throughout his performance or only at chosen moments. Occasionally, they may suggest that he did not use gesture throughout; for example, in the famous frontispiece illustration of Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 61, which shows Chaucer reciting part of *Troilus and Criseyde*, the *poeta* has neither book nor gesture — his hands seem merely to be gripping the edge of the pulpit in front of him.¹⁸

So how much gesture should the speaking Narrator use in a production of *Ecerinis*? Narrators in manuscript illustrations seem usually to use gesture either to point out the characters who are the subjects of the action or to help them instil a moral lesson in the audience. This suggests the general principle that gestures should happen on only one narrative level at once, and that they may help the

¹⁴ McKinnell, 'Significant Gestures', p. 302.

¹⁵ McKinnell, 'Significant Gestures', p. 310.

¹⁶ See Meg Twycross, 'The Theatricality of Medieval English Plays', in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Theatre*, ed. by Richard Beadle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 37–84 (p. 57).

¹⁷ See Elizabeth Salter and Derek Pearsall, 'Pictorial Illustration of Late Medieval Poetic Texts: The Role of the Frontispiece or Prefatory Picture', in *Medieval Iconography and Narrative – a Symposium*, ed. by Flemming G. Andersen, Esther Nyholm, Marianne Powell, and Flemming Talbo Stubkjær (Odense: Odense University Press, 1980), pp. 100–23 (pp. 119, 120, 122).

¹⁸ For an illustration, see Salter and Pearsall, 'Pictorial Illustration', p. 107.

audience to recognize the level that is uppermost at any given moment. Thus when the Narrator uses gesture, we are primarily in his world, that of Padua *c.* 1318, and the miming actors should be still, as if they were no more than pictures in the Narrator's book. When the fictive action is uppermost, the miming actors should come alive, and audience attention should be focussed on them, with the Narrator contributing only his voice. I expect this to be particularly important during the speeches of the Messenger, who does not have any personal part to play in the plot, but it will probably be almost equally so in the debate between Ezzelino and Frate Luca in Act III, and even in scenes of rapid military preparations, gestures by the Narrator would probably seem merely distracting. The one point where this principle may not apply is in the songs of the Chorus: to what extent might the Narrator be shown to share their feelings by using gesture at a time when, for once, he is not speaking? This will be determined through practical experiment in rehearsal.

Conclusion

Many of the problems discussed in this note will require pragmatic answers, which will have to be arrived at before any public performances take place. A director may have any number of subtly varied 'virtual performances' in his or her mind, but in the end, only one set of choices can be selected for actual realization. We propose to test the success or otherwise of our strategies through a survey of audience reaction. However, we shall also bear in mind that the results will represent the impressions of people who have seen the play only once and who will be less familiar with its conventions than members of the company are. In this respect, our cast will probably be more similar to a fourteenth-century Paduan audience than our audiences are. But further comment must await the actual performances; to say more now would be even more of a hostage to fortune than this note already is.

UNWINDING STORIES: CHALLENGES OF THE EXPOSITOR IN EARLY MODERN POLISH POPULAR THEATRE

Jolanta Rzegocka

Early modern popular theatre in Poland reserved a special place for an expository narrator who in many instances is seen managing the audience, preaching, and inviting participation in devotions or pacing the narrative for one or more days of performance. As a reader, a summariser, and an actor, the expositor embodied one of the main principles of the European biblical drama which was an abridgement of Salvation history. Play texts that preserve the part of the expositor show how the historical blended with the allegorical in the play and how the audience's religious and dramatic awareness was raised. In many cases the prologue and epilogue speakers refer to the real-life situation of the audience and disclose part of the stage business that a modern reader/viewer would otherwise have missed.

Although there is no evidence in Polish biblical theatre of the expositor doubling up his role with the roles of actors or the onstage prompter, the prologue and epilogue speaker has a number of significant functions. The expositor's role is truly fascinating and demanding: it is a solo performance that has to pacify the crowd, get the spectators' attention, arouse their interest, and set the stage for the forthcoming play. Almost every task of the expositor figure entails conveying a moral message, presenting biblical and apocryphal sources of the play, and occasional ruling out non-Catholic interpretations. The expositor often referred to the local reality, made allusions to the present, and thus bridged two distant worlds: the biblical world and the sixteenth-century world of Polish Sarmatia. Rhetorical forms that accompanied expository functions range from occasional jokes and simple orations to solemn greetings and prayers. Since the expositor's

role largely depended on the festive context of a play, it is worth examining Easter plays, Saints' plays, and processional Palm Sunday plays separately in order to clarify the role.

Saint Anne and Izaak Plays

Most of the biblical plays from Poland have a short prologue and an epilogue where a narrator addresses the audience, specifies the location, and describes the festive context of the play.¹ The expository narrators function outside the dramatic action and do not appear between the acts. They summarize the plot and urge the audience to join in with individual acts of piety or stay for the liturgical celebration. Both prologues and epilogues contain elements of exegetic preaching. Two late sixteenth-century plays, *Joachym y Anna* and *Sacrificium Abrahae* from the so-called *Horodecki Codex*, illustrate well the function of prologue and epilogue speakers.² The prologue in the play of Saint Anne starts with a humble greeting and continues as a plot summary. The speaker gives a detail of a possible staging: we learn that the play is being staged in an open square:

Prologus.

Rzeć którą teras na thym placzu zaczynamy
 Ac nic owszem niegodną osob wasych znamy
 Prosim o trochę czasu byście iey słuchali
 A pilność iesli będzie Personam przyznali
 Historyą przykłądną godna iest pamięci
 Którą po wszystkim świecie dzien dzisiejszy święci.³

¹ The layout of these parts may be different: the play text may include the prologue and epilogue in the first and the last act or give a separate heading; in each case the speakers are mentioned among the dramatis personae.

² *Joachym y Anna: Comedia o nieplodności Anny S. z Joachimem mężem iey których w dziewiędziesiąt lath uraczył P. Bog Potomstwem Błogosławioną Panną Marią między czorkami Syonskiemi nigdy nieporównaną* [Joachim and Anne: Comedy about the infertility of S. Anne and Joachim her husband who in their nineties were blessed by God with an offspring, Blessed Virgin Mary incomparable among the daughters of Sion], Ossolineum Library MS 6710/I (The Horodecki Codex), fols 77–114. Edited by Józef Kraszewski in *Athenaeum*, 2 (1841), 95–126; *Sacrificium Abrahae*, Ossolineum MS 6710/I (The Horodecki Codex), fols 169–84; see *Dramaty staropolskie: Antologia* [Early Polish Drama: An Anthology], ed. by Julian Lewański (Warsaw: PIW, 1959), II, 415–33.

³ *Joachym y Anna*, lines 1–6. All translations are mine unless stated otherwise.

[The matter that we begin in this square,
 Though we think it is not worthy of you,
 We pray to grant us some time and listen to it,
 And if you listen carefully to the Persons
 You will have an exemplary history worth remembering
 That the world is celebrating today.]

There follows a detailed summary of the plot where the narrator tells about the misfortune of Anne and Joachim, their social alienation, and the great joy after Anne gave birth to a daughter and an Angel appeared to Joachim who had found his retreat among the shepherds in the mountains.

The epilogue speaker once again refers to the setting of the play and invites everybody to praise the Lord, and while admitting that the overall message of the play was clear and needed no clarification, he nevertheless breaks into a preaching tone and stresses the importance of faith and perseverance in Christian life. In doing so he draws on the tradition of dramatic exemplum:

Epilogus

Rzecz która się przed wami na tym placu działa,
 Co by w sobie za sprawę potajemną miała
 Nie trzeba wiele mówić wszystkoście baczyli,
 Jeśliście pilnie na to oczyma patrzyli.
 Już was nie będziem bawić, bogobojny gminie
 U którego prawdziwa pańska chwała płynie,
 Dzień pański dziś szczęśliwie wszyscy odprawiajcie
 Jeśli kiedy tedy dziś panu chwałę dajcie.
 Historyą przykładną tę miejcie w pamięci
 Którą po wszystkim świecie dzień dzisiejszy święci.

Pomnijcie jako P.Bóg raczył błogosławić
 Joachymowi i w łasce przy sobie zostawić,
 Widzicie jako to jest rzecz można u Pana,
 Gdy kto z zupełną wiarą padnie na kolana.
 A dla jego imienia ocz go kolwiek prosi,
 Baczym iż każdy taki pociechę odnosi,
 Jako ci dwoje ludzi, Joachym i Anna
 A których się narodziła ta przesliczna panna.⁴

[The matter that took place in front of you in this square
 did not have any secrets
 that would need more words of explanation — you have seen everything
 if only you were watching attentively.
 We will entertain you no more, pious people

⁴ *Joachym y Anna*, Epilogus, lines 639–56.

who treasure the glory of our Lord.
 Today let everyone gladly celebrate the day of the Lord,
 This is the day to give praise to the Lord.
 Keep in your minds the exemplary story
 That this day celebrates across the world.

Remember how God blessed Joachim
 and kept him by His side —
 and you will see that God is powerful:
 Someone who falls on his knees with profound faith
 and asks for anything in His name
 will always find consolation
 Just like these two, Joachim and Anne
 who gave birth to the most beautiful lady.]

The expositor adds that the play was staged on the feast of Saint Anne after the liturgical celebration dedicated to the patron saint of the day and urges everybody to take part in devotions, to burn incense and candles, and to pray at the altar of Saint Anne:

Dziś nabożnie kadzidła wszyscy zapalajmy,
 Wszyscy dziś pięknym kołem wesoło śpiewajmy,
 Dziś co łąki Arabskie wonne zioła dają
 Niech w święto Anny Ś. z rąk wszystkich pałają,
 I z wosku świeca aby przez ten dzień gorzała,
 A przy niej tuż modlitwa przy ołtarzu trwała
 Byśmy przez ten wszystek dzień cna panię chwalili.⁵

[Today let everybody light incense,
 let us sing joyfully in a nice circle,
 whatever fragrant herbs there are in Arabian meadows,
 let them burn in everybody's hands on the feast of St Anne
 and may the wax candle burn all day long,
 so that the prayer continues at the altar
 and that we could praise the Lady all day long.]

The prologue in the play of Izaak has the same function as in the Saint Anne Play: the speaker gets the audience's attention with a standard request and proceeds with a plot summary.

Historyją przykładną w[asz] m[ość] mieć będziecie,
 Jeśli pilno słuchania przyłożyć zechcecie.⁶

⁵ *Joachym y Anna*, Epilogus, lines 659–65.

⁶ *Sacrificium Abrahae*, Prologue, lines 1–2.

[Your lordships, you will have an exemplary story
if you lend us your ears.]

The narrator's speech in this prologue is emotionally charged: some of the exclamations in the narrative of Abraham preparing to sacrifice his son at the altar display a truly Baroque quality of intense suffering and pity:

Jaka tam żałość była kiedy
Miał zabijać ręką swą Synaczka miłego!
Żałośnię tam narzekał, ledwie same skały
Słuchając go wespół z nim ledwie nie płakały.⁷

[What a sorrow was there
When he was about to kill his only beloved Son!
He wept in such sorrow that the rocks
That listened to him almost cried.]

The opening speech finds its logical continuation in the epilogue where the story of Abraham and Izaak is interpreted as an emblem (*figura*) of Christ's sacrifice:

Figura Chrysta Pana tu się wyraziła,
Która w naświetszy ofierze namilsza mu była,
Bóg Ociec Syna swego tu na te niskości
Spuścił na ofiarowanie, dla naszych złości.⁸

[Christ's emblem has been shown here
that was the most desired in the holy sacrifice
God the Father has sent His own Son to these low regions
as a sacrifice for our sins.]

There follows a short lesson on the meaning of the Cross, divine Providence, and God's Mercy. The preaching is based on a clear message: he who relies on God will not be deserted:

Bóg sie nam w ty ofiarze sam tu pokazuje,
Kiedy Syna Abraamowi zabić rozkazuje.
Widzicie, iże kto sie na Pana Boga swego spuści,
Iże go on do śmierci nigdy nie opuści
Uczcież sie tedy, uczcie ufać takowemu
Panu, który zapłaty nie zaprze nikomu.⁹

[God himself appears to us in this sacrifice
as He orders Abraham to kill the son

⁷ *Sacrificium Abrahæ*, Prologue, lines 7–10.

⁸ *Sacrificium Abrahæ*, Epilogue, lines 344–47.

⁹ *Sacrificium Abrahæ*, Epilogue, lines 354–59.

You can see that he who relies on the Lord
 will not be deserted till the moment of death
 Learn therefore, you have to learn to trust the Lord
 who does not refuse a reward to anyone.]

The epilogue concludes with a communal Eucharistic prayer that crowns the interpretational role of the expositor. In both plays the epilogue speakers end on a high pious note that underlines the spiritual elevation of the faithful and may be considered as a prelude to further liturgical celebration.

Historyja *and* Intermedium

One of the most interesting types of expository narrators in Polish plays is a combination of a prologue speaker with a gospel reader who is usually called *Ewangelista*, as, for example, in *Historyja o Chwalebnym Zmartwychwstaniu Pańskim* or in *Intermedium pro Dominica Palmarum*.¹⁰ These figures have a double role and a double function to perform. Firstly, they summarize the play as vividly as they can by enumerating the dramatis personae and by weaving all the events into a logical whole. Secondly, they introduce each scene by reading a passage from the Scriptures and thus become masters of ceremony. Although in common use, an Evangelist is one of the four writers of the gospel, not a reader of them, there are no hints in the Polish plays as to the *Ewangelista* being or acting as a gospel writer. He introduces himself as an expositor whose task is to read a combination of four synoptic gospels. It may therefore be supposed that there existed a local Polish tradition of *Ewangelista* whose authority of an expository narrator came from his function as a gospel reader.

In the prologue *Ewangelista* retells the story and he may also give additional hints to stress the significance of certain events. By doing so, he can establish a causal connection between distant facts. In *Intermedium*, for example, the expositor makes an unexpected link between the Pharisees' search for motives to arrest Christ and the fact that Christ dined at the Last Supper outside the city walls. *Ewangelista* says that Christ had his last meal in a secluded place surrounded only by the disciples because on the eve of the Crucifixion he was exiled from the city of Jerusalem on the command of the Jewish priests. According to the narrator, the

¹⁰ Mikołaj of Wilkowiecko, *Historyja o Chwalebnym Zmartwychwstaniu Pańskim* [The history of the glorious resurrection of the Lord] ([n.p.], c. 1580); *Intermedium pro Dominica Palmarum*, ed. by Lewański in *Dramaty staropolskie*, II, 251–68.

‘trick’ of banishment that the Pharisees played on Christ allowed them to separate him from the crowd — a potential arrest witness:

Rozmaitych dróg szukali,
Jakoby go zabić mogli.
Jeno iż nic takowego
Mogli wymyślić na niego,
K temu się pospółstwa bali,
Aby go im nie bronili,
Więc ten fortel wymyślili:
Z miasta na noc go wygnali.¹¹

[They looked for different ways
of killing him,
but since they could not
invent anything,
and they feared the crowd
would defend him,
so they thought of a trick:
they expelled him from the city for the night.]

By highlighting a little-known detail of the Holy Week events and by calling the plotting of the Pharisees a trick, the prologue speaker guides the audience through the plot of a play and gives them some clues concerning interpretation. At the same time he stresses the wickedness of the Pharisees and develops the stage character of Christ who is depicted here as a banished person exempted from municipal jurisdiction. The effect that characterization technique had on the audience could not be missed: when a messenger comes to announce Christ’s banishment towards the end of the play, the audience is reminded that the historical reality of Jerusalem could easily blend with the real-life situation of the audience where different forms of ecclesiastical and secular banishment were practiced:

Intermedium part II

Iwan, zatrąbiwszy w róg po trzykroć, będzie wołał głośno.

Panowie, raczcie posłuchać,
Co wam będę obwoływać
Od Tergomy Jego Mości,
Rychtarza w tej miejskiej włości [...]

Clara voce

Każdy widział i też słyszał
Z jaka pompą w miasto wjechał

¹¹ *Intermedium*, lines 67–74.

On dobrych ludzi zwodziciel
 I wszystkich grzesznych przyjaciół,
 Co się Synem Bożym czyni,
 A na tem się barzo myli [...]

Przeto Ich mość Biskupowie
 I też wszyscy doktorowie,
 Z swemi Faryzeuszami
 I ze wszystkimi cechami
 Miasta Jerozolimskiego [...]

Dzisiaj społem uradzili [...]
 Iżbym oznajmił każdemu
 Bogatemu ubogiemu,
 By go żaden nie przyjmował
 Ani w swym domu nocował,
 Jałmużny by mu nie śmiał dać,
 Za pieniądze nic nie sprzedać,
 Najmniejszej rzeczy i krzyny,
 Jeśli chcesz ująć ciężkiej winy.¹²

*[Ivan, having blown the horn thrice, will shout loudly
 Your lordships pray,
 listen to what I have to announce
 in the name of Tergoma,
 the mayor of this township [...]]*

Clara voce
 Everybody has seen and heard
 how pompously entered the city
 this deceiver of the good men,
 and friend to all sinners
 who calls himself erroneously
 the Son of God [...]

Therefore, lords Bishops,
 And all the doctors
 With the Pharisees
 And all the guilds
 of the town of Jerusalem [...]

Have decided [...]
 And asked me to announce
 To the rich and the poor:
 Do not host him

¹² *Intermedium*, lines 356–97.

And do not receive him in your houses for the night
 Do not dare giving him alms
 Do not sell anything to him
 Not even the smallest thing
 If you want to escape cruel punishment.]

Use of the sixteenth-century vocabulary in the passage above, involving words such as mayor (*rychtarz*) and guilds (*cechy*), helps to bridge the historical gap in the dramatic plot. Ivan, the messenger who publicly recalls Christ's supposed wrongdoings, was a well-known figure in early modern towns of Christian Europe as was the curse of life in banishment. It is important, however, to bear in mind that it was already the prologue speaker who introduced the element of local reality into the play. In a word, it is the narrator who brings play closer to life.

The *Ewangelista* figure in *Historyja o Chwalebnym Zmartwychwstaniu Pańskim* has a similar function of assuring plot integrity and bridging the biblical world and the situation of real life. The play combines canonical and non-canonical episodes from Salvation history in order to educate and entertain the parishioners. The expositor states that the story of the Paschal Triduum known from the gospels is incomplete, and therefore missing elements, like the Harrowing of Hell scene, have to be substituted from the Creed, the psalms, and the writings of the Church Fathers. The prologue speaker lists two sources:

Część czwarta według Dawida
 I krześcijańskiego kreda
 O tym się będzie płała
 I to rozpamiętywała.
 Jako Pan do piekiel stał,
 Ojce święte z nich wybawił.¹³

[The fourth part according to David
 and the Christian Creed
 will tell us
 in detail
 how the Lord entered Hell
 and liberated the holy Fathers.]

It is unlikely that the audience would have noticed the stitches in the plot; however a play with a strong moral message and a didactic purpose could not leave the fact without a comment on the part of an expositor. As in *Intermedium*, the expositor's main task is to summarize and tell the story, and this is done with utmost care. Already in the first lines the play establishes its sources of reference and the narrator

¹³ *Historyja*, Prologus, lines 83–88.

announces that the actors are about to embark on showing and telling '*Ista* [This] completely true story | Put together from the Holy Scriptures'.¹⁴ As the prologue continues, the expositor discloses the method of the play's composition:

A jeśli co takowego
Do tego aktu świętego,
W tej chwalebnej historyje
Nad tekst świętej Ewangelijej
Będziem przywozić skądinąd,
Nie poczytajcie nam za błąd.
Bo jeśli co przyczynimy,
Tedy z starych Patrów mamy.

[If, however, we bring something else
Into this holy play,
Into this glorious history
If we quote something
From outside the text of the Holy Gospel,
Do not think we made a mistake,
Because if we add something,
It comes from the Church Fathers.]¹⁵

The passage refers to the scene of the Descent into Hell in part 4 of the play. Besides enumerating the sources, the expositor refers to the common sense and judgement of the audience:

Ostatek sami osądźcie,
Jesli nie tak jest na świecie,
Co my tu będziem spominać,
Nad Pismo święte przyczyniać.

[Judge the rest yourselves:
If what we will say
From outside the Holy Scriptures
Is not how it is in the world.]¹⁶

In these words he highlights the connection between the events shown and the present, the parallel established by the expositor in the banishment episode of the previously discussed *Intermedium*. What is more, the expositor here encourages

¹⁴ *Historyja*, lines 59–60: 'Istą prawie historyją | Z Pisma świętego zebraną.' Translations of the *Historyja* are by Rob Sulewski, Ann Arbor, Michigan, and printed by kind permission of the translator.

¹⁵ *Historyja*, lines 97–104.

¹⁶ *Historyja*, lines 105–08.

the audience to recapitulate the teaching of preachers and reflect upon the meaning of the Easter liturgical celebration: Christ has come to change the course of nature, to defy its laws, and to fulfil God's initial promise of Redemption.

As a prologue speaker *Ewangelista* operates outside the action of the play, but he strengthens the integrity of the plot while quoting the sources, adding and highlighting certain episodes. At the same time he shapes a close relationship between audience and stage by putting stress on the relevance of dramatic action to the lives of the audience members.

Expositor as a Gospel Reader

As already mentioned, the *Ewangelista* of a number of biblical plays from sixteenth-century Poland combines the role of a prologue speaker with that of a gospel reader. This is the case with *Historyja* and the Palm Sunday plays like *Intermedium*. Besides being an abridger and storyteller, *Ewangelista* often appears between the acts and reads a relevant passage from the Scriptures. The role of a reader allows the narrator to introduce an element of liturgical celebration in the play.

In some plays the appearance of the gospel reader at regular intervals seems to be a matter of deliberate decision. The *Historyja* example clearly shows that the evangelist's role was not set once and for all. In its full version the play has a tripartite structure made of evenly distributed pieces of drama with singing and gospel readings. However, the play's introduction, addressed 'to him who would produce this history', allows the director to disregard a carefully conceived pattern and makes the readings and the singing optional:

A komu by się też zdało, dla prętszego odprawienia historyjej, może nie czytać Ewangeliję, która jest *per totam historiam in suis locis*. Może kto chce, opuścić i śpiewanie, które jest też *per totam historiam*, ale dobrze by z śpiewaniem.

[Whoever desires a faster performance can omit the Gospel readings which take place *per totam historiam in suis locis*. He who wishes can also omit the singing, which occurs *per totam historiam*, although the play is better with the songs.]¹⁷

The passage shows that besides song and drama, readings too were conceived as a way to present the Paschal story and to introduce an element of liturgical

¹⁷ *Historyja*, foreword to the performers, ed. by Lewański, *Dramaty staropolskie*, II, 289. A full version of the play combined three modes of representation: gospel reading (prose), a play (drama), and a religious hymn (lyric). Each of these parts makes a narrative of its own. Their combination within a play shows how entertainment, instruction, and devotional practice were presented to a popular audience.

celebration.¹⁸ Once a director of the *Historyja* decided to include a gospel reader in the production, the reader was responsible for managing a separate strain of narrative within the play — the harmony of the four Gospels and the other texts that went into making the play. One of his appearances as a gospel reader within the play is announced by *Ewangelista* in the following way:

Przy tej tu już części czwartej
 Na miejscu Ewangeliej
 Będę wam czytał z Dawida
 I z krześcijańskiego Kreda:
 Ze psalmu Dawidowego
 Dwudziestego i trzeciego,
 A z Kreda krześcijańskiego
 Ze Składu Apostolskiego
 W liczbie artykułu piątego,
 Który jest Filipa świętego.
 [Here in the fourth part,
 In place of Gospel,
 I'll read to you from the words of David
 And from the Christian creed:
 From the third and twenty
 Psalm of David,
 And from the Christian creed
 The Apostles composed
 In the fifth article
 Of Saint Philip.]¹⁹

The solemn context in which the *Ewangelista*-reader could appear was similar to liturgical gospel reading: everybody was asked to rise and listen to the word of God. Although there is no such request in *Historyja*, there are such lines in *Intermedium* where *Ewangelista* also reads in the course of the play and announces:

Której to Ewangeliej
 Części pierwszej sentencyjej
 Raczie Wasz Moście posłuchać
 I ku niej na nogi powstać.

Ewangeliją czytać „cum appropinquaret dominus hierosolimam etc.”²⁰

¹⁸ *Historyja* shows that in early modern biblical plays music was used for representational rather than for affective purposes.

¹⁹ *Historyja*, act IV, lines 471–80.

²⁰ *Intermedium*, lines 135–38.

[of this Gospel
I will read the first verses
Your Lordships, be so kind
as to listen and rise.

Read Gospel 'cum appropinquaret'.]

In a play like the *Historyja* the reader operated outside the play and made it easier for the director to disregard him and keep the plot and the action intact. If included, however, the reader assumed the role of a preacher who read the Scriptures to the faithful and instructed in matters of faith. While the appearance of the gospel reader in biblical plays was a matter of negotiation, in plays arranged in a processional order, like *Intermedium pro Dominica Palmarum*, the presence of the *Ewangelista*-reader was crucial. Successive Gospel readings were not meant to be omitted since they made the core of the scenario and were the only elements that tied together the random scenes and the ritual form. Without the gospel passages read by *Ewangelista* the processional character of the performance is likely to have become unclear and the ritual itself may well have lost its significance. Therefore, it is possible to conclude that it was the processional aspect of Polish Palm Sunday plays that influenced the way the expositor figure was used. *Ewangelista* in *Intermedium* combines three roles: his function extended from being a narrator and reader to being a prompter. He first gives a long introductory speech outlining the events from Palm Sunday to the moment of Christ's seizure by the Romans. He then summarizes the order of the festive procession that is about to start:

A takowy będzie wszytek
Tej procesyjej porządek:
Bedziem częścią śpiewali,
Częścią wierszami mówili.
A tak najpierw poczniemy,
Z kościoła wszyscy wyńdziemy
I zasie przydziem do niego,
I będziem stać pośród jego.
Wyścim z kościoła to znacząc,
Jako ludzie śli się kwapiąc
Ku Jezusowi miłemu,
U Bethfaje będącemu.
Do kościoła zaś wróceniem
Tego pamiątkę uczynim,
Jak Pan Chrystus w miasto wjechał,
Jak się do kościoła dostał.²¹

²¹ *Intermedium*, lines 105–20.

[And the order
of the procession will be as follows:
we will partly sing
partly speak in verses.
And so we will start
by coming out of the church
and later we will come back,
and stand in the middle of it.
Leaving the church
Signifies that the people hurried to see
beloved Jesus
who was in Bethany.
By coming back to the church
we will commemorate
Christ's entrance into the city
And into the church.]

Later on *Ewangelista* reads the Gospel passages. As he sets out to perform all these tasks, his third role emerges — that of a prompter and conductor of the entire event. In *Intermedium*, as already seen, he asks everybody to rise before reading the Gospel. He describes the order of the procession, and finally he is the one who tells the audience of the right direction of movement. *Ewangelista* thus becomes a conductor for the audience and a prompter for the actors since he starts each scene with a relevant biblical passage and moves forward the dramatic action.

Intermedium reveals one more important function of the expository narrator: he was the keeper of festive tradition and a representative of the community faithful. While summarizing the order of the procession, *Ewangelista* humbly refers to the collective memory of the audience who, having participated in it for years, should be more familiar with the matter than the expositor himself:

Aczby nie trzeba powiadać,
Snadź też ani wspominać
Przed Waszemi Miłościami,
Cnemi Pany i Paniami
O dzisiejszej Procesyjnej
I o sprawach służących jej,
Bo snadź one lepiej wiecie,
Niż ode mnie usłyszycie,
Dłaczegoby ją czyniono,
W dzień dzisiejszy sprawowano.²²

²² *Intermedium*, lines 1–10.

[There is no need to tell
nor remind
Your Lordships
Honourable Ladies and Gentlemen
about today's procession
and the matters that serve it
for you know better
why it is being done
and celebrated today
than you will learn it from me.]

What *Ewangelista* seems to be saying is that he would always be ready to remind the audience about the significance of the feast and forms of celebration, for this is the role he has been given:

Wszakże mi to zlecono
I na to miejsce ustąpiono,
Tedy [mi] przyjdzie powiadać,
I z Pisma Świętego wykładać
Tak jak mi rozkazano
I też wierszami podano.²³

[For I have been told to do so
And I have been admitted to this place
To tell you
And explain the Holy Scriptures
According to the command
And the verses I got.]

The ritual aspect of the performance and repetitive staging is also referred to when the expositor speaks about 'recollecting' the scenes from Christ's life:

Toć my będziem wspominać,
W osobach swych pokazować [...]
Uczyńże nas wždy godnymi,
Z kapłany sługami twymi
I z tymi małymi dziatki
Czynić pamiątkę Twej męki,
Abyśmć chwałę śpiewali
I drugie k niej pobudzali
Naszym niewinnym śpiewaniem,
Ceremonii sprawowaniem.²⁴

²³ *Intermedium*, lines 11–16.

²⁴ *Intermedium*, lines 75–76, 93–100.

[We will recollect this
and show in persons [...]]

May the Lord make us
and the priests your servants,
and these little children
worthy to commemorate your Passion
so that we sing your glory
and move the others
with our innocent singing
and celebration of the ceremony.]

The expositor stresses here that the act of recollection is inscribed in every religious celebration, and Palm Sunday plays are no exception. At the same time, it can be seen how his introductory speech embraces the entire community of the faithful, together with the priests and the children who play the part of Jerusalem youths. This is an act of introducing the other participants of the ceremony by the master of ceremony himself.

What *Intermedium* shows better than any other play is that expository narrators often speak in the name of the audience members and so reassure them in their religious sentiment, as in the following passage:

A Wasz Moście też nas słuchając,
I sprawie się przypatrując,
Społem Boga chwalcie z nami,
Z wzdychaniem nabożnym Panu.²⁵

[And you, my lordships listen to us, too,
and watch the matter attentively,
and with us give praise to the Lord,
with pious sighs praise Him.]

Not only do the frequent references to the audience show that *Ewangelista*'s role was to strengthen the community, but also the change of person and tone of voice had the same function. The first part of *Ewangelista*'s speech in *Intermedium* concludes with a prayer spoken 'mutata voce' in the name of the entire community of the faithful. Moreover, there are numerous changes from first-person singular to plural throughout the entire opening speech. The technique cannot be purely incidental since it marks the change of perspective from the expositor's to that of the entire community. Whenever *Ewangelista* summarizes the plot or tells a story he uses a dramatic 'I' or 'We' to refer to the actors, but as soon as he starts talking

²⁵ *Intermedium*, lines 101–04.

about collective memory or initiates a prayer, he switches to the dramatic 'We' and instantly erases the division between actors and audience. The change of dramatic perspective underlines the play's devotional character and long tradition of staging. A similar technique of changing perspective is used also in the prologue to *Dialogus de resurrectione* where the expositor called Prologus addresses the audience:

A my, na pamiątkę jego
Zmartwychwstania Pana swego,
Z tryumfy rozmaitymi
Pana Jezusa pochwalmy.²⁶

[To commemorate
The resurrection of our Lord,
Let us praise Lord Jesus
With various triumphs.]

The above consideration of the narrator's addresses to the audience leads to a conclusion that Polish expository narrators were responsible for managing the audience. They have been seen directing the people in a procession or telling them to rise for the gospel reading. Occasionally, they struck a lighter tone. *Ewangelista* in *Historyja* gives his speech a comic touch when he makes allusion to the audience's patience. He says that the songs that they sing between the acts will wake them up from their afternoon nap:

Waszmość się już uspokójcie
A rzeczy pilno słuchajcie.
A chcąc waszmość mieć czujniejsze
I też w słuchaniu pilniejsze,
Dla poobiedniego spania,
Będziem używać śpiewania,
Które waszmość budzić będzie
Miedzy wierszykami wszędzie.

[Your lordships, please, I ask your silence now;
Please listen carefully to these things.
Since we want your lordships to be more alert,
And listen more diligently,
We will use singing
Instead of an afternoon nap

²⁶ *Dialogus de resurrectione Domini nostri Jesu Christi*, Ossolineum Library MS 198, fols 319–24. Ed. by Lewański in *Dramaty staropolskie*, II, 355–69 (lines 49–52). The same techniques of alternating persons by the expositor have been used in *Historyja*.

To awaken your lordships
Throughout these verses.]²⁷

While considering the protean figure of the narrator in Polish popular theatre it may be wondered whether their primary function was to summarize or deliver comic 'ice-breaking'. However, one of the narrators seems to pinpoint his actual role when he says that he will read the gospel passages successively and the procession will unwind like a ball of wool:

Będę czytał po sentencji
Tekst Świętej Ewangelijej,
Wedle której historyja
I ta Święta Procesyja
Pójdzie od przodku do szczytku
Właśnie jako nić po kłębk. ²⁸

[I will read the text of the Holy Gospel
verse by verse
and so the history
as well as the Holy Procession
will proceed from the beginning till the end
like a thread in a ball of wool.]

It can be inferred from the passage above that summarizing and gospel reading were functions subordinated to the task of storytelling. Unwinding stories in solemn and at times comic mode was the most important function of the *Ewangelista* in Polish biblical plays. Their storytelling was enhanced by the switch from singular to plural pronoun as well as by careful delivery of speech and change of voice. It is difficult to be clear at this point what exactly the change of voice might have been. What is known from the stage directions is that both narrators discussed above changed in tone and probably in vocal pitch for dramatic effect.²⁹ The

²⁷ *Historyja*, lines 115–22. Expositors in Saint Anne and the Izaac play use a standard form of invitation, promising the audience an interesting story, provided they 'lend their eyes and ears'. *Joachim y Anna*, lines 27–28: 'Historyą przykładną WM. obaczycie | Jeśli oczu i uszu pilno przyłożycie' (You will see an exemplary history if you lend your eyes and ears with attention); *Sacrificium Abrahæ*, lines 17–18: 'I insze rzeczy w[asz] m[ość] mieć potym będziecie, | Jeśli oczu i uszu nakłonić zechcecie' (And you will have other matters later, if you kindly lend us your eyes and ears).

²⁸ *Intermedium*, lines 129–34.

²⁹ In the play the tone of voice is being used also for characterization. See my discussion of the Prologue in *Historyja*: 'Evoking Auditory Imagination: On the Poetics of Voice Production in *The History of the Glorious Resurrection of the Lord* (c. 1580)', in *Oral History of the Middle Ages*:

Intermedium Ewangelista utters part of his speech ‘mutata voce’ and the expositor from *Historyja* has to speak ‘distincte’, taking breaks at regular intervals, on average every four or five lines.³⁰ Their speech is accompanied by a number of stage gestures: ‘Inclinat caput’, ‘aperiet et inclinat caput’, ‘extendat iunctus manus’.³¹ Expositors as storytellers employed traditional theatrical devices and gestures to give weight to their argument and to stress their role of an external authority.

Expository figures in sixteenth-century vernacular biblical plays from Poland appear either in classical guise of prologue and epilogue speakers or as *Ewangelista* who summarizes the plot and reads gospel passages in the course of a play. Both types of expository narrators function outside the play, but the level of their engagement in the production varies. While the traditional expositors limit themselves to a short summary at the beginning and make a closing speech with elements of preaching, *Ewangelista* shapes the relationship between audience and stage by assuming a triple role of abridger, master of ceremonies, and gospel reader. He does not appear at the end of the plays under discussion. This may suggest a more open and popular treatment of function as opposed to the epilogues of saints plays which were modelled on classical patterns.

A closer consideration of the roles leads to a conclusion that the primary role of *Ewangelista* was storytelling. The function of the expositor-storyteller serves a number of purposes. One of them was to strengthen the festive tradition and to remind the audience of the liturgical context of a play. The expositor also fulfilled a didactic purpose as he stepped forward to make an oration, quote the sources of the play, and explain the meaning of subsequent acts. Occasional change of tone and stage gestures of paying tribute, praying, and greeting helped to deliver the message to the audience. Finally, the *Ewangelista* was also a prompter since he read appropriate passages from the Scriptures and thus initiated subsequent acts. All these roles lead to the function of storytelling. It is by unwinding stories — whether as summary or as Gospel harmony — that the *Ewangelista* becomes part of the structure of the play and it is thanks to him that the play can ‘proceed from the beginning till the end like a thread in a ball of wool’.

The Spoken Word in Context, ed. by Gerhard Jaritz and Michael Richter, *Medium Aevum Quotidianum*, 12 / CEU Medievalia, 3 (Budapest: Krems, 2001), pp. 248–56.

³⁰ The stage directions say: ‘he will pause for a while’ (*przestanie troche*), *Historyja*, after lines 10, 18, 28, 32, 36, 52, 96, 114.

³¹ *Intermedium*, after lines 16, 76, 78, 100. The manuscript has an error, ‘aperiat’ for ‘aperiet’.

PUPPETS, MINSTRELS, KINGS, AND SHEPHERDS: EXPOSITORY NARRATORS IN EARLY SPANISH THEATRE

Max Harris

The question to be addressed in this chapter has to do with the expository narrator in early Spanish theatre: was there such a person and, if so, what was his (or, in at least one fictional instance, her) role? For reasons of accessibility — in terms both of theatrical practices that seem less strange to the modern reader and of evidence that requires less speculative interpretation — I propose to begin at the end of the story chronologically and to do so with a form of entertainment in which the narrator's role is simple and obvious: the early seventeenth-century Spanish puppet theatre.

Puppet Theatre

In Miguel de Cervantes's *Don Quijote de la Mancha*, the hero Don Quixote and his servant Sancho Panza were sitting one evening in an inn, when 'a man came in dressed in chamois-leather — leggings, hose, breeches, doublet — and roared, "Have you got any room for the night, landlord? The fortune-telling ape and the puppet show about the freeing of Melisendra are on their way here."' The visiting showman was known as Maese Pedro (Master Peter). The concern here is not with Maese Pedro's 'fortune-telling ape', but with his puppet show.¹

Cervantes's fictional dramatization of the chivalric rescue of Melisendra from Moorish captivity by her husband, Don Gaiferos, involves puppets who act but do not speak. Their story is narrated and their actions explained by a boy with a

¹ For the puppet show, see Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, *Don Quixote*, part 2, trans. by John Rutherford (London: Penguin, 2000), pp. 654–70.

pointer. The puppet booth, we read, was quickly set up, 'glowing all over with wax tapers that made it a glittering, resplendent sight'. Maese Pedro 'disappeared inside it, because he was the one who worked the puppets, and in front of it stood a boy, Master Pedro's servant, to act as announcer [*declarador*] and interpreter [*intérprete*] of the mysteries of the show: he held a pointer [*varilla*] to indicate the puppets as they emerged'.

Maese Pedro is also the sound man. The audience hears 'war-drums and trumpets and artillery' ring out 'from inside the theatre'. Then, the young announcer briefly summarizes the plot and introduces the puppets as they appear: 'Here you can see Don Gaiferos playing backgammon. [...] And that character coming into view over there with a crown on his head and a sceptre in his hands — he's the Emperor Charlemagne, Melisendra's foster father, who's angry at his son-in-law's laziness and negligence and is coming to scold him; and see with what warmth and feeling he does it, it looks as if he's going to bang him on the head half a dozen times with his sceptre.' Charlemagne leaves. Sir Gaiferos is furious: 'Now you see him in his rage', the boy comments, 'hurling the backgammon board far from him and calling for his arms and armour, and he asks his cousin Roland to lend him his sword Durindal.'

The action shifts to Zaragoza, where Melisendra is imprisoned. 'Now look at that tower you can see over there', the boy instructs his audience. 'The lady in Moorish clothes on that balcony is the matchless Melisendra.' Responding to the gestures of the puppets, he adds, 'Can't you see that Moor sneaking up behind Melisendra with his forefinger over his lips? Well, now look how he gives her a kiss slap on the mouth, and how soon she spits and wipes her lips with the white sleeve of her blouse'.

And so the dialogue of narrative and action continues, Maese Pedro manipulating the puppets and the boy pointing his baton and explaining the actions of the puppets to the audience. Gaiferos crosses the stage on horseback to reach Zaragoza. Melisendra, seeing him, is overjoyed but becomes accidentally entangled in her descent from the castle walls. The boy improvises: 'But oh how unlucky, look, the hem of her skirt's got caught on one of the balcony railings, and she's been left hanging in the air and can't reach the ground.' With the help of the puppeteer, Gaiferos manages to free her and they gallop off together. The Moorish king summons his forces and gives chase. 'See the resplendent cavalry riding out of the city in pursuit of the two Christian lovers; how many trumpets blaring, how many pipes rather like shawms playing, how many kettle drums and other sorts of drums beating.'

Unfortunately, Don Quixote's inability to distinguish fiction and reality takes over at this point. Determined to protect the fleeing lovers, he assaults the puppet

theatre, slicing, maiming, and beheading the pasteboard figures (*figurillas de pasta*). Maese Pedro quickly ducks out of sight and so survives the attack.

This is, of course, a fictional account of a puppet show. J. E. Varey, unable to reconcile the account satisfactorily with an exclusive use of either 'marionettes of the Sicilian type' or mechanical figures 'moved on a rotating wheel', suggests that Cervantes may have imagined rather than seen such an elaborate show.² This may be the case, but, as Charlotte Stern points out, even fictional literary texts can be vital sources of information on the ephemeral and often sparsely documented early secular theatre in Castile.³ Brief documentary references to Spanish puppet shows abound after the middle of the sixteenth century, but period eye-witness accounts are unknown: fictional accounts are as close as we get. If nothing else, the literary accounts tell us which conventions bore the mark of verisimilitude for the reader. Moreover, although the kind of puppets imagined by Cervantes may be in doubt, there seems to be little question that the 'narrative form of dramatic presentation reflects real Spanish practice' in puppet theatres of the period.⁴

The second part of *Don Quijote de la Mancha*, in which the puppet show appears, was published in 1615. In the same year, Cervantes published a collection of plays, *Ocho comedias y ocho entremeses*, including *El retablo de maravillas* (The Marvellous Puppet Show). In this short interlude, three rogues play a trick on a rural audience, pretending to stage an elaborate puppet show but warning their audience beforehand that 'whatever appears in the puppet show remains invisible to anyone who has the least drop of Jewish blood in his veins, or was born out of wedlock'.⁵ All that the audience, in fact, sees is a blanket that passes for a tapestry strung across an invisible stage. While a dwarf 'musician' plays an invisible stringed instrument, the other two rogues comment on the action in the manner

² J. E. Varey, *Historia de los títeres en España (desde sus orígenes hasta mediados del siglo XVIII)* (Madrid: Revista de Occidente, 1957), pp. 232–37. All translations, unless otherwise stated, are my own.

³ Charlotte Stern, *The Medieval Theater in Castile* (Binghamton: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1996), pp. 145–200.

⁴ James T. Monroe, 'Prolegomena to the Study of Ibn Quzmān: The Poet as Jongleur', in *El romancero hoy: Historia, comparatismo, bibliografía crítica*, ed. by Samuel G. Armistead, Antonio Sánchez Romeralo, and Diego Catalán (Madrid: Gredos, 1979), pp. 77–129 (p. 98 n. 63).

⁵ For the Spanish text of the play, see Miguel de Cervantes, *Entremeses*, ed. by Nicholas Spadaccini (Madrid: Cátedra, 1989), pp. 215–36. For an English translation, from which I quote, see Miguel de Cervantes, *Eight Interludes*, trans. by Dawn L. Smith (London: Everyman, 1996), pp. 93–109.

of Maese Pedro's boy: 'Over there I perceive the figure of Samson the brave embracing the pillars of the Temple, which he means to hurl to the ground. [. . .] That young lady entering now, so attractive and elegant, that's Herodias. She's the one whose dancing cost John the Baptist his head.'⁶ Bulls, lions, bears, and — to frighten the ladies — mice are also announced, causing consternation in the audience, which must, of course, pretend to see the action or risk the charge of impurity of blood or birth. Although the play's puppet show is imagined in more senses than one, Cervantes's interlude assumes its audience's knowledge of a real convention of narrated puppet theatre.

So does José de Valdivielso's charming Nativity poem *Ensaladilla del Retablo* (1612).⁷ The poem begins with a youth playing a tabor and inviting passers-by to the nighttime performance of a Nativity play.⁸ The author of the play then quietens the assembled audience and announces the well-known story of Christ's birth. Another youth sits nearby on a bench, holding a guitar, ready to explain in song the actions of the puppets in this 'teatro de las manos' (theatre done with hands).⁹ When the Holy Family arrives at the inn, amidst a snowfall simulated with falling jasmine and orange blossoms, 'the youth begins to sing' the dialogue between the Virgin and innkeeper:

Give lodging to a virgin
Who will do you good.

There is no room, so go with God.¹⁰

The silent action of the puppets continues through the birth of Christ, the promise of release for souls in limbo, the angelic annunciation to the shepherds (from the midst of a mechanical cloud that opens like so many of its kin in the full-scale

⁶ It was, of course, Salome, who (according to Matthew 14. 6–10) danced for the head of John the Baptist. Herodias was her mother. Cory A. Reed, 'Dirty Dancing: Salome, Herodias and *El retablo de las maravillas*', *Bulletin of the Comediantes*, 44 (1992), 7–20 (p. 9) notes that the confusion of Salome and Herodias was common in medieval and Renaissance Europe.

⁷ José de Valdivielso, *Romancero espiritual*, ed. by J. M. Aguirre (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1984), pp. 317–21.

⁸ For other traditional European Nativity puppet shows, ranging from hand-held mechanical crib scenes, with narrative commentary by the operator, to elaborate marionette performances, see Varey, *Historia*, pp. 87–90; Jacques Chesnais, *Histoire générale des marionnettes* (Paris: Bordas, 1947), pp. 81, 88–94, 104.

⁹ This phrase may suggest the use of glove puppets, but Varey, *Historia*, p. 159, believes the description as a whole is more consistent with the use of marionettes.

¹⁰ Although sung by the youth, this quotation involves two 'speakers'.

religious theatre of the period),¹¹ and a joyous dance of the shepherds before the newborn Christ. The sung commentary ranges from human dialogue through the pleas of the patriarchs in limbo to various songs of angels and shepherds. The show ends with a celebratory *juego de cañas* fought by teams of winged cherubs.

Charles Magnin, the great nineteenth-century French historian of the puppet theatre, believed the combination of a hidden puppeteer and a visible assistant who 'faces the audience and explains the represented action in great detail' to be the simplest, most ancient, and historically the most common form of puppet show¹² (Figs 6 and 7). For one person to manipulate the puppets while simultaneously telling the story in narrative form or — an even more complex task — by imitating the several voices of the puppets in dialogue, as the modern Punch and Judy puppeteer does, requires far greater concentration and skill.

Just such an early Spanish combination of puppeteer, narrator, and mimic is briefly described, however, in Francisco López de Ubeda's picaresque novel, *La Pícara Justina* (1605). When, early in the novel, Justina recounts her family history, she mentions that her great-grandfather was a puppeteer in Sevilla. As it happens, she says, he was a dwarf, no taller than the normal span between an elbow and a hand; thus, 'the only difference between him and his puppets was that of speaking with or without a cerbatana'.¹³ A 'cerbatana' or 'pito', according to

¹¹ See, for example, Francesc Massip Bonet, *La ilusión de Ícaro: Un desafío a los dioses* (Madrid: Centro de Estudios y Actividades Culturales de la Consejería de Educación Cultura de la Comunidad de Madrid, 1997), pp. 51–53. Varey, *Historia*, p. 182, notes that, in the comedias known to have been adapted for the puppet stage, 'the cloud [...] or *araceli* of the medieval stage' was called for more than any other scenic apparatus. Such an *araceli* is used to spectacular effect in the *Misteri d'Elx*, still performed each year on the Feast of the Assumption (August 15) in Elche, Alicante.

¹² Charles Magnin, *Histoire des marionnettes en Europe* (Paris: Michel Lévy, 1862), pp. 100–01. Max von Boehn, *Dolls and Puppets*, trans. by Josephine Nicoll (Philadelphia: David McKay, 1932), p. 311, writes of the English marionette theatre around 1600: 'During the performances a showman spoke in front of the curtain, explaining the actions on stage'. For two illustrations (Figs 6 and 7) of eighteenth-century Italian puppet shows, which Varey, *Historia*, p. 95 n. 11, believes to include external narrators, see Boehn, *Dolls and Puppets*, pp. 343–44, or Max von Boehn, *Puppen und Puppenspiele*, 2 vols (Munich: F. Bruckmann, 1929), II, 81, 83. While Varey's explanation is plausible, it is also possible that one of the 'narrators' is no more than an accompanying musician and the others — for the second illustration contains two potential 'narrators' — are announcers, responsible for drawing a crowd.

¹³ Francisco López de Ubeda, *La Pícara Justina*, ed. by Antonio Rey Hazas, 2 vols (Madrid: Nacional, 1977), I, 174–75. A very helpful French translation of this opaque passage can be found in Magnin, *Histoire*, pp. 102–03. A considerably less helpful English version can be found in the much abbreviated translation of Ubeda's novel by Captain John Stevens, *The Spanish Jilt* (London: [n.pub.], 1707; repr. 1889), p. 3.



Figure 6. Kasperle puppet show in Italy. Eighteenth-century engraving.
From Max von Boehn, *Puppen und Puppenspiele*, 2 vols (Munich:
F. Bruckmann, 1929), II, 81.



Figure 7. Kasperle puppet show in Venice. Etching by Zomponi, 1785.
From von Bochn, *Puppen und Puppenspiele*, II, 83.

Magnin, was a small whistle made of ivory or metal, used by a puppeteer to disguise his own voice and to produce the unnatural voices of his puppet characters.¹⁴ This is known by English-speaking ventriloquists and Punch and Judy puppeteers as a 'swazzle'. It is now a semicircular whistle made of leather and cellophane, about the size of an American quarter, 'fitted inside the mouth at the juncture of the teeth and gums. With the proper air current directed by the tongue, the cellophane vibrates and makes a loud high pitched tone. With subtle changes in air stream and tongue position, actual notes can be crafted'.¹⁵

Justina further explains her great-grandfather's speaking 'with or without a *cerbatana*' as 'decir la arenga o plática'. In modern Spanish, 'arenga' and 'plática' both denote forms of public address, roughly akin to 'harangue' and 'lecture'. But Justina later expands 'arenga' to 'arenga titerera', to denote a form of address peculiar to a puppet show; and Magnin understands 'plática', in this instance, as synonymous with 'sifflet-pratique' or, simply, 'pratique', the French term for a 'swazzle'. He suggests that Justina's great-grandfather was delivering the 'arenga', or narrating the story, in his own voice and providing the dialogue, in the several voices of his puppet characters, with the aid of the 'plática'. Thus, the puppeteer was able to deliver a complex one-man show, in which he was at once the narrator and the manipulator and voice of the puppets.¹⁶

Varey assumes, however, that 'the great-grandfather spoke with a swazzle [*pito*] at the same time as a member of the company, from outside the little theatre, was explaining the actions of the puppets to the public'.¹⁷ He appears to have confused Magnin's careful reading of Ubeda's narrative with Sebastián de Covarrubias's generic definition of 'titeres' (puppets) in his *Tesoro de la lengua castellana, o español* (1611), for Covarrubias also mentions the use of the 'swazzle' or 'pito'. 'Puppets', he writes, are 'certain little figures which foreigners bring [to us] in puppet shows [*retablos*]. Showing only their bodies [i.e. above the waist], they manipulate them [so that they look] as if they were themselves moving. The puppet masters, [concealed] behind a cloth and inside a wooden booth [*castillo*], whistle through several swazzles [*unos pitos*], so that the figures seem to speak. The

¹⁴ Magnin, *Histoire*, pp. 46, 102. See also Varey, *Historia*, pp. 94–95, who adds wood, tortoise-shell, and silver to the materials of which a *cerbatana* could be made; Boehn, *Dolls and Puppets*, p. 311.

¹⁵ I found this helpful description of a swazzle by ventriloquist Jay Johnson on 3 June 2004, at <<http://www.monkeyjoke.com/VentAd.html>>.

¹⁶ Magnin, *Histoire*, pp. 102–03.

¹⁷ Varey, *Historia*, p. 193.

interpreter [*intérprete*], on the outside, explains what it means.¹⁸ Covarrubias is thinking of glove puppets, visible only above the waist, rather than mechanical puppets, which he defines a moment later; but he does confirm the general use of the external interpreter — even if this was not the case with Justina's great-grandfather — and he describes more than one puppeteer manipulating the figures, each using several 'swazzles'. Presumably the 'swazzles' were of different pitches, making possible a wider range of voices.

Something akin to Covarrubias's puppet theatre — albeit with mechanical rather than glove puppets — is imagined by Cosme Gómez Tejada in his *León prodigioso* (1634), a lengthy moral allegory in which all the characters are animals.¹⁹ At one point, a vixen marches through the streets, announcing, to the accompaniment of trumpet and drum, a 'retablo de duelos' (puppet theatre of sorrows). Attracted by the vixen's proclamation, a crowd gathers in 'a spacious courtyard'. The 'vixen puppeteer' positions herself 'to one side of the theatre with a pointer [*varilla*] in her hand'. Curtains and doors open to reveal the first of a series of painted scenes, each 'copied from an original in Rome', and numbers of 'small sculpted figures, which other concealed vixens move by means of certain mechanisms, while also imitating the voices of the mute actors'.²⁰ This would seem to indicate, as Varey points out, a complex 'mechanical puppet show' (*retablo mecánico*),²¹ requiring more than one operator, each of whom also speaks for one or more of the mechanical puppets. After a lengthy prologue, in which she promises all kinds of entertainments ('games, banquets, feasts, bulls, tournaments, love affairs, plays, weddings, conversations, friendships, riches, [and] honours'), mixed inevitably with 'sorrows, labours, miseries, and misfortunes', the vixen puppeteer — who is also the author of the play — 'raise[s] her *varilla*, point[s] to the [first] scene', and gets the show under way.²²

¹⁸ Sebastián de Covarrubias Orozco, *Tesoro de la lengua castellana, o español* [1611], ed. by Felipe C. R. Maldonado, rev. edn Manuel Caarero (Madrid: Castalia, 1994), p. 922, v. *títeres*. Varey, *Historia*, p. 94, cites Covarrubias's definition.

¹⁹ For the puppet show, see Cosme Gómez Tejada de los Reyes, *León prodigioso, apologia moral entretenida y provechosa a las buenas costumbres, trato virtuoso y político* (1634) (Madrid, 1670), pp. 252–67. The most relevant passage is quoted in Varey, *Historia*, pp. 201–03.

²⁰ Gómez Tejada, *León*, pp. 252–53.

²¹ Varey, *Historia*, p. 201.

²² Gómez Tejada, *León*, pp. 253–54.

The puppet show lacks an overall narrative, consisting instead of a series of scenes illustrative of human life. The first scene, for example, is set in a gambling den. 'Look at those who are playing [cards]', says the vixen:

These are men normally thought to be composed and judicious, but their changing facial expressions [at the card table] make them seem mad. How happy are those who win! Hear the liberties they take with those who lose! [. . .] Look, too, at the onlookers, idle people, who say little, some waiting for handouts from the winners, others passing time, as if they have done well for themselves and will lack nothing at the hour of their death.²³

And so it continues: the vixen indicates and explains the details of each successive scene, encouraging her audience to 'look' (*mirad*), 'see' (*ved*), 'hear' (*oid*), and 'listen to' (*escuchad*) the action on stage. Once again, the role of the expository narrator is essential to the success of the entertainment.

This survey of fictional, early seventeenth-century Spanish puppet shows has yielded a wide range of narrative modes: a single puppetmaster and juvenile narrator, armed with a pointer, in the Maese Pedro episode of *Don Quijote*; two trickster narrators and a dwarf musician (but, of course, no puppeteer!) in *El retablo de maravillas*; a single adult puppeteer and a younger singing narrator-guitarist in Valdivielso's *Ensaladilla del Retablo*; a puppeteer, narrator, and ventriloquist (using a swazzle) all rolled into one in López de Ubeda's *La Pícara Justina*; and, in Covarrubias and Gómez Tejada, multiple puppeteers and ventriloquists (each using, according to Covarrubias, multiple swazzles) providing action to be interpreted by an external narrator. In Gómez Tejada's version, the narrator carries a pointer and, rather than being the assistant, is the author and director of the show. These methods were used indiscriminately, it seems, with glove puppets, mechanical figures, and marionettes.

The question which now needs to be addressed is whether these same narrative modes, many of which are still extant in the modern puppet theatre, were also used in the early Spanish theatre with flesh and blood actors. With the clear example of the puppet theatre now in place, three examples of expository narrators in the live theatre — found in a poem by the Arabic poet Ibn Quzmān, the illustrations to Alfonso X's *Cantigas de Santa Maria*, and the *farsas* of Diego Sánchez de Badajoz — can be examined in chronological order.

²³ Gómez Tejada, *León*, p. 254.

Ibn Quzmān

Ibn Quzmān (c. 1086–1160) spent most of his life in Córdoba, during the latter stages of Almoravid rule in al-Andalus. His entire known work is contained in a collection of 149 Arabic *zağals*, the sole surviving manuscript of which was rediscovered in 1881.²⁴ A *zağal* or *zéjel* is a strophic composition in which the first three lines of each strophe rhyme with one another while the fourth and final line rhymes with the one-line refrain. The language used is generally colloquial rather than classical.

James Monroe has argued that Ibn Quzmān's *Zağal No. 12*, known in Spanish translation as 'El zéjel de los juglares' ('The *zéjel* of the minstrels'), is best explained by supposing that 'Ibn Quzmān is simulating the voice of a jongleur who is directing a popular performance of some kind'.²⁵ If Monroe is correct, the jongleur first prepares his troupe of musicians, dancers, and actors; then, as the performance unfolds, he interprets the action on stage to his audience.

In the first strophe, the voice of the jongleur calls on his musicians to prepare their instruments: three drums, a tambourine, castanets, and a shawm. The instruments named suggest that these are musicians from a lower class rather than a courtly setting.²⁶

In the second strophe, the troupe is told to 'cover the *qúrra*'. Monroe, followed by Federico Corriente, takes *Qurra* to be the proper name of a 'female impersonator' whom the jongleur's assistants are to dress 'in women's clothes: a flowing

²⁴ *Todo Ben Quzmān*, ed. by Emilio García Gómez, 3 vols (Madrid: Gredos, 1972). For English translations (and transliterations) of selected *zağals*, see A. R. Nykl, *Hispano-Arabic Poetry and its Relations with the Old Provençal Troubadours* (Baltimore: [n.pub.], 1946), pp. 266–301. For the rediscovery of the manuscript, see *Todo Ben Quzmān*, ed. by García Gómez, I, 3; Nykl, *Hispano-Arabic Poetry*, pp. 266–67.

²⁵ Monroe, 'Prolegomena', p. 80. Monroe (pp. 78–81, 127–29) includes a photograph of the original Arabic manuscript, a transliteration, a literal English translation, and an English verse adaptation of the poem. For an Arabic edition and slightly divergent transliteration of the poem, see F. Corriente, *Gramática, métrica y texto del cancionero hispanoárabe de Aban Quzmān* (Madrid: Instituto Hispano-Arabe de Cultura, 1980), pp. 90–95. For yet another transliteration and Spanish translation, see *Todo Ben Quzmān*, ed. by García Gómez, I, 64–67. Two more Spanish translations can be found in Emilio García Gómez, 'Siete zéjeles de Ben Quzmān', *Revista de Occidente*, 6 (1964), 129–45 (pp. 131–33), and Ibn Quzmān, *El cancionero hispanoarabe*, ed. by F. Corriente Córdoba (Madrid: Nacional, 1984), pp. 69–70.

²⁶ Monroe, 'Prolegomena', pp. 81–86, 120.

veil, a taffeta robe, and some amulets'.²⁷ Another possibility, not previously noted, is that *qúrra* may be a variant spelling of *kurra* or *kurraj*, the Arabic word for a skirted hobbyhorse. Such hobbyhorses were known in Baghdad at least by the early ninth century and had reached Córdoba by 1075.²⁸ Monroe inadvertently alludes to this possibility in his verse adaptation of the *zağal*, when he speaks of the *qúrra* wearing taffeta with 'a full-length tail' rather than with 'a full border'.²⁹ Moreover, the jongleur later calls for the preparation of a 'she-camel', confirming — unless the camel was real! — the troupe's familiarity with animals represented by human actors in costume. At least one other instance is reported, in ninth-century Baghdad, in which such a camel either danced with or was compared to a *kurra*.³⁰

In the third strophe, a dance involving a 'villager' and three women 'enlivens the stage'. The dancers 'ululate in unison'. In the fourth strophe, a 'judge' —

²⁷ Monroe, 'Prolegomena', p. 86; Corriente Córdoba, in Ibn Quzmān, *Cancionero*, p. 316. Nykl, *Hispano-Arabic Poetry*, pp. 274–75, and García Gómez, in both *Todo Ben Quzmān*, pp. 64–65, and 'Siete zéjeles', p. 132, change 'qúrra' to the personal name 'Zuhra' without explanation.

²⁸ For the Arabic *kurraj* or skirted hobbyhorse, see Shmuel Moreh, *Live Theatre and Dramatic Literature in the Medieval Arab World* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1992), pp. 27–37; Max Harris, 'From Iraq to the English Morris: The Early History of the Skirted Hobbyhorse', *Medieval English Theatre*, 25 (2003), 71–83. Henri Pérès, *La poésie andalouse en arabe classique*, 2nd edn (Paris: Adrien-Maisonneuve, 1953), p. 344, ranks the *kurraj* alongside chess as one of the two games for which the Moors of al-Andalus showed a real 'passion'. The earliest known record of an Andalusian *kurraj* is found in *Historia Abbadidarum*, ed. by Reinhart Dozy, 3 vols (Leiden: Luchtmans, 1846–63), I, 324. In January 1075, while being entertained by a dancing *kurraj*, Muhammed Ibn Martin — who served the last Abbādid ruler, al-Motamid, as commander of the garrison in Córdoba — was surprised by an attack on his palace and killed. In Reinhart Dozy, *Spanish Islam*, trans. by Francis Griffin Stokes (London: Chatto and Windus, 1913), p. 675, *kurraj* is unfortunately paraphrased as 'a dance of Almahs'. See also R. Dozy, *Histoire des Musulmans d'Espagne*, ed. by E. Lévi-Provençal, 3 vols (Leiden: Brill, 1932), III, 99, where it is '*almées*'. Moreh, *Live Theatre*, p. 35, cites the original Arabic '*kurraj*', but mistakenly dates the incident to 977.

²⁹ Cf. Monroe, 'Prolegomena', pp. 79 and 127.

³⁰ Writing of a conversation that took place at the palace of the Caliph al-Mu'tamid (870–92), the historian al-Mas'ūdī (d. 956) has one of the speakers mention 'dances of a different character, such as those named *al-ibl* (camel) and *al-kurra* (the hobbyhorse): see Maçoudi, *Les Prairies d'Or*, trans. by C. Barbier de Meynard, 9 vols (Paris: Société Asiatique, 1861–77), VIII, 101. Moreh, *Live Theatre*, p. 28, understands this to be a single dance, 'the camel and the hobbyhorse', but it seems to me more likely that 'the camel' and 'the hobbyhorse' were singled out as 'dances of a different character' because the former was a variant of the latter.

whom the jongleur presumptuously claims as a friend — joins the audience. Cushions are provided to make him comfortable. The jongleur then calls for a lute, perhaps to accompany a ballad.

In the fifth and sixth strophes, ‘we have a description of a mock battle and its accoutrements: swords, fighters, Arabs, a warcry, wounds, flight’.³¹ The jongleur is both instructing the members of his troupe (‘Let me have a warcry from the Arabs’, ‘Prepare your she-camel’) and directing the audience’s attention to the sights and sounds of the performance:

What do you think of this warrior, and of the little wounded shiekh,
Beside whom is an attendant with a fly-whisk, who has been spared by God?
What about his lament as he mourns, and his drivel as he weeps?
Thus indeed he makes his exit, after having appeared before you.³²

Monroe concludes that the mock battle is being mimed while the jongleur directs and comments on the action. This is not, in other words, the virtuoso performance of a single jongleur telling the story of a battle in his own words, while adopting the various voices of his characters and illustrating the narrative with gestures and actions.³³ The battle scenes in epics such as the *Poema de mio Cid* may well have been presented in this way,³⁴ but in Ibn Quzmān’s *Zağal No. 12* — if Monroe is correct — the jongleur is at this point directing and explaining the mimed actions of an entire troupe.

In the seventh strophe, the jongleur performs tricks with two live dogs, making it appear that they understand human speech. In the eighth and final strophe, the jongleur passes the hat and bids farewell to his audience. The poem has thus artfully sketched, in brief compass, the words of ‘a very busy *impresario* who directs his musicians, singers, dancers, actors, and trained animals, while seeing to the comfort of his audience to whom he interprets the action being performed onstage by commenting on it’.³⁵

³¹ Monroe, ‘Prolegomena’, pp. 121–22. For reasons that completely fail to persuade me, Corriente Córdoba, in Ibn Quzmān, *Cancionero*, p. 317, reads these strophes as if they referred to the biblical account of Joseph in Egypt.

³² Monroe, ‘Prolegomena’, p. 80.

³³ Monroe, ‘Prolegomena’, p. 94.

³⁴ See, for example, John K. Walsh, ‘Performance in the *Poema de mio Cid*’, *Romance Philology*, 45 (1990), 1–25.

³⁵ Monroe, ‘Prolegomena’, p. 97.

Las Cantigas de Santa Maria

The next example comes from a very different social setting. The *Cantigas de Santa María* (Canticles of Holy Mary), produced for Alfonso X el Sabio (1221–84) of Castile-León, are a collection of 427 poems, set to music, in praise of the Virgin Mary. Most recount miracles in which Mary intervenes to protect or otherwise bless her devotees. The first poem and every tenth poem through number 400 is a song of praise rather than a miracle narrative. Two illustrated editions of the poems survive. One of these, known as the *Códice Rico* (Biblioteca de San Lorenzo el Real de El Escorial, MS T.I.1), contains 195 lavishly illustrated poems and their musical settings. In the other (Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, MS B.R.20 or, more simply, F for Florentine), the work of illustration was left unfinished. The illustrations consist, for the most part, of six-paneled miniatures, each panel containing a vignette illustrating sequentially — in the manner of a cartoon strip — an episode in the corresponding poem. Each vignette is ordinarily accompanied by a summary caption.³⁶

Alfonso X was the driving force behind the *Cantigas*, sponsoring their production, playing an active role in their collection, and almost certainly writing some of the poems himself. Moreover, in both the poems and the illustrations, the King appears in the role of a troubadour pointing others to the blessings of devotion to Mary. In the prologue, he writes, ‘And that which I seek is to praise the Virgin. [...] I wish from this day forth to be Her troubadour, and I pray that She will have me for Her troubadour and accept my songs. [...] From now on I choose to sing for no other lady, and I think thereby to recover all that I have wasted on the others’.³⁷ In the illustrations, he is frequently shown either praying to Mary or directing an audience of courtiers towards the depicted action of the stories. It is on the basis of the latter illustrations, in which Alfonso appears in the role of a

³⁶ Alfonso X, el Sabio, *Cantigas de Santa María*, ed. by Walter Mettman, 3 vols (Madrid: Editorial Castalia, 1986–89); *Songs of Holy Mary of Alfonso X, the Wise*, trans. by Kathleen Kulp-Hill (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2000). For a full-colour facsimile of the *Códice Rico*, see Alfonso X el Sabio, *Cantigas de Santa María: edición facsímil del Códice T. I. 1 de la Biblioteca de San Lorenzo el Real de El Escorial, Siglo XIII* (Madrid: Edilán, 1979). An extensive selection of colour reproductions of the *Códice Rico* illustrations can also be found in John Esten Keller and Annette Grant Cash, *Daily Life Depicted in the Cantigas de Santa Maria* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1998). For the Florentine Codex, see Alfonso X, el Sabio, *Cantigas de Santa María: edición facsímil del Códice B.R.20 del la Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale de Florencia, Siglo XIII* (Madrid: Edilán, 1989–91).

³⁷ *Songs*, trans. by Kulp-Hill, p. 2.

narrator or expositor, that some scholars have suggested that episodes from the songs of praise were staged as a kind of court liturgical drama.³⁸

Ana Domínguez Rodríguez was the first to do so. In a paper delivered in 1981, she noted that episodes from the life of Mary (and thus, too, of Christ) appear in the illustrations of the praise poems, and that it is possible to group these episodes into 'a cycle that begins with the Tree or Rod of Jesse', continues through the birth and childhood of Mary and the life, death, and resurrection of her son, and ends with the coronation of the Virgin and her intercession at the Last Judgement. 'These images', she writes, 'are almost always accompanied by the representation of King Alfonso, "as the troubadour of Mary", reciting the *cantiga* before his courtiers, intervening in the action by signalling with his hand — even to the point of touching the divine characters — and occasionally acting and taking part in the gospel scenes, as if we were dealing with dramatic representations which had taken place in the palace chapel'.³⁹

In the illustrations that accompany *Cantiga* 20 in the Florentine Codex, for example, three of the vignettes represent episodes from the life of Mary or of Christ: the Annunciation, the Nativity, and the Descent into Hell. The other three show Alfonso mediating between a courtly audience and the action of the narrative. In the first vignette, he turns his head to speak to a seated audience on his right. His right hand gestures to the audience, while his left hand points across the margin to the Annunciation in the second vignette. In the sixth vignette, the King adopts a similar posture in the space between a kneeling audience on his right and the angel Gabriel on his left. In the fifth vignette, his connection to the action is even more tangible: he touches the sleeve of Gabriel's robe (as he does, even more intimately, with Mary's mantle in the third vignette of the *Códice Rico* illustration of *Cantiga* 70). 'Faced with these vignettes', Domínguez Rodríguez writes, 'it is easy to suppose the existence of dramatic representations in the palace'.⁴⁰

In 1990, John Keller published an article in which he endorsed and elaborated on Domínguez Rodríguez's hypothesis, focussing in particular on the *Códice Rico*

³⁸ Ana Domínguez Rodríguez, 'Iconografía evangélica en las *Cantigas de Santa Maria*', in *Studies on the Cantigas de Santa Maria: Art, Music, and Poetry*, ed. by Israel Katz and John E. Keller (Madison: Hispanic Seminary of Medieval Studies, 1987), pp. 53–80; John E. Keller, 'Drama, Ritual, and Incipient Opera in Alfonso's *Cantigas*', in *Emperor of Culture: Alfonso X the Learned of Castile and his Thirteenth-Century Renaissance*, ed. by Robert I. Burns (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990), pp. 72–89.

³⁹ Domínguez Rodríguez, 'Iconografía', p. 54.

⁴⁰ Domínguez Rodríguez, 'Iconografía', p. 58.

illustrations to *Cantigas* 1 and 90. The latter is especially interesting. *Cantiga* 90 is a song in praise of Mary's defeat of the devil through her chaste conception of Christ. In the first vignette, Alfonso kneels before the Virgin. Behind him stands an audience of women. In the second vignette, the angel Gabriel greets Mary. Behind Mary, a devil seems to be caught beneath a trapdoor laden with stones. The devil, like several others in the miniatures, is of the kind seen on many a medieval stage, the necessarily human shape of the actor distorted by costume and mask 'in the most orryble wyse'⁴¹ (Fig. 8).

In the third vignette (Fig. 9), we see — reading from left to right — a group of haloed women, a kneeling Jewish priest, and a seated Mary. Since this page of illustrations lacks captions and there is no obvious connection to the poem at this point, the nature of the action represented is unclear. Intriguingly, however, the 'actors' seem to be on a raised platform or stage. Following Domínguez Rodríguez's lead, Keller writes, 'A stairway leads up to the stage, and underneath the steps appear three closed doors. To Ana Domínguez, these seem to be the trapdoors placed beneath stages to provide entrances and exits for devils and other actors. It is difficult to imagine what else these doors could represent — leading one to suppose, with reason, that the artist had a stage before him as he painted or that he had a stage in mind.'⁴² The right-hand side of the vignette, in which the Jewish priest and the Virgin appear, also seems to represent a stage. There are no steps, but the three doors below the raised platform reappear.

In the fourth vignette, the devil is 'tightly bound', as the language of the poem requires. In the fifth and sixth vignettes, Alfonso again mediates between the Virgin and an audience (now seated and male). In the latter, the devil reappears, held down by two angels: in the words of the poem, he 'lies in straw' or 'mire'.⁴³ Although the details of the dramatic plot are not entirely clear, the influence of contemporary theatrical practice does seem likely. Studying the illustrated pages of the *Códice Rico*, it is hard to argue with Keller's conviction that 'the artists had staging in mind when they painted the miniatures'.⁴⁴

⁴¹ *The N-Town Play: Cotton MS Vespasian D.8*, ed. by Stephen Spector, 2 vols, Early English Text Society, SS, 11 and 12 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), I, 314.

⁴² Keller, 'Drama', p. 89; cf. Domínguez Rodríguez, 'Iconografía', p. 58.

⁴³ *Songs*, trans. by Kulp-Hill, p. 115.

⁴⁴ Keller, 'Drama', p. 89. Keller and Cash, *Daily Life*, p. 2, 'agree with the well-known art historian Ana Domínguez Rodríguez that some of the *cantigas de loor* [songs of praise] are dramatizations'.

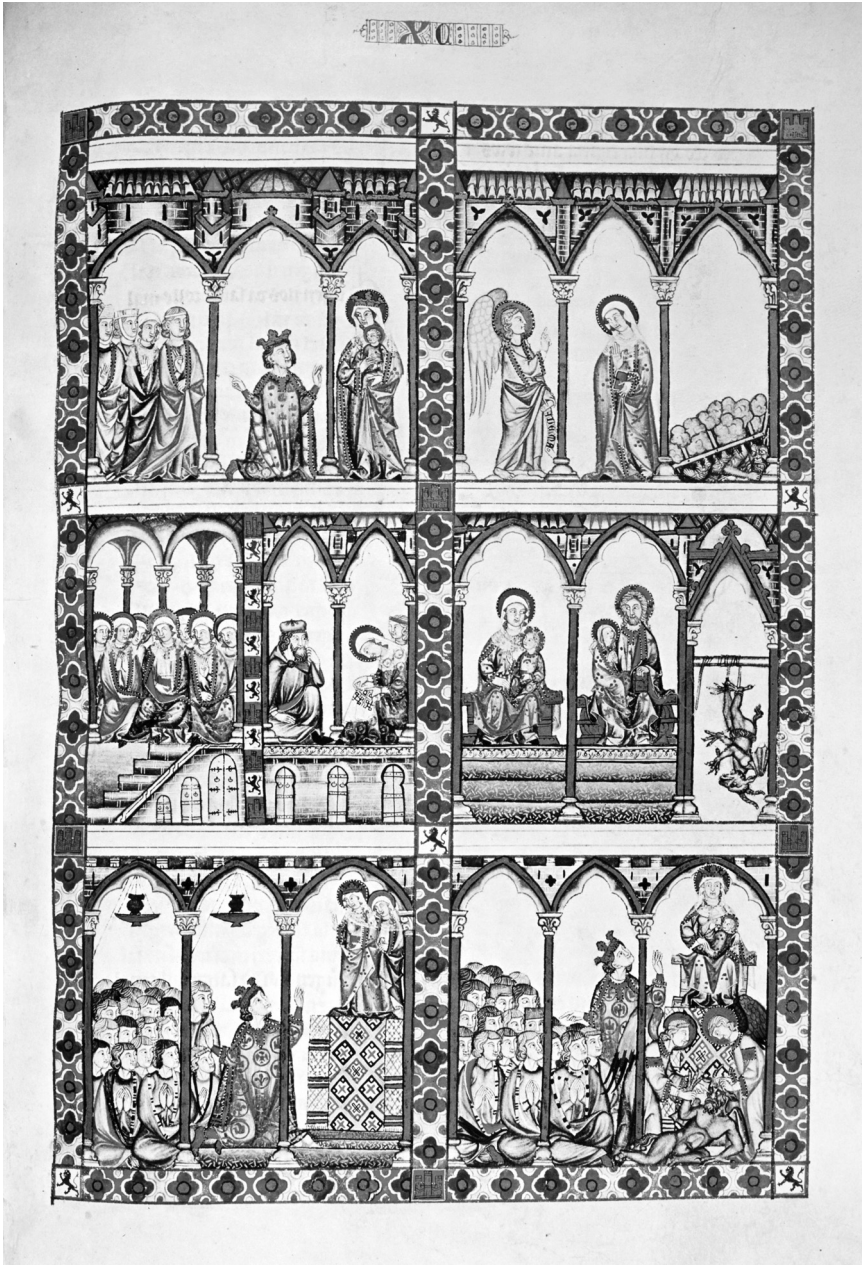


Figure 8. *Cantigas de Santa María, Códice Rico* (Escorial MS T.I.1), complete page of illustrations to *Cantiga* 90. Reproduced by courtesy of the Department of Special Collections, General Library System, University of Wisconsin-Madison.



Figure 9. *Cantigas de Santa María*, *Códice Rico* (Escorial MS T.I.1), third panel of the illustrations to *Cantiga* 90. Reproduced by courtesy of the Department of Special Collections, General Library System, University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Neither Keller nor Domínguez Rodríguez suggests that Alfonso staged a complete cycle of Marian plays, although such remains an intriguing possibility. Nor does either of them discuss in any detail the illustrations to the miracle *cantigas*, in which Alfonso — the first-person narrator of the poems — is not visually depicted. In 1958, Keller noted that the image of Mary in several of the miracle

cantigas seems to change position from one panel to the next.⁴⁵ Nine years later, he suggested that this might be due to a live actor playing the part of Mary.⁴⁶ Close scrutiny of the illustrations to the miracle *cantigas* shows, indeed, that Mary not only often moves her head and hands, but that she sometimes shifts between a seated and a standing position and even steps down from the image's pedestal to take part in the action of the miracle itself.⁴⁷ In 1998, writing with Annette Grant Cash, Keller reaffirmed his conviction that 'some of the miracles, and not only the songs of praise, may have been dramatized, as they were in France'.⁴⁸ Despite such occasional speculation, however, Alfonso's absence from the illustrations of the miracle *cantigas* has tended to focus attention on the possible dramatization of the songs of praise.

Lacking independent documentary confirmation of the historical staging of the *Cantigas*, Keller attempts to strengthen his case by pointing out that Alfonso was well aware of the possibility of dramatizing religious history. In his influential law code, known as the *Siete Partidas*, the King forbade clergy to take part in 'far-cical plays [*juegos de escarnio*]', but allowed them to participate in representations of the Nativity and Resurrection of Christ, 'which induce men to do good and to have devotion for the faith'. He insisted, however, that such plays should be staged under the jurisdiction of archbishops, bishops, or others in similar positions of authority.⁴⁹ His own jurisdiction, as authoritative narrator, would certainly have met this requirement.

Keller and Domínguez Rodríguez do not deal in any great detail with the kind of staging that they imagine the *Cantigas* to have received. They simply draw attention to the presence of an audience in the pertinent vignettes, to the mediating role of Alfonso, and to any elements in the illustrated narrative action that suggest

⁴⁵ John Esten Keller, 'Daily Living as Presented in the *Canticles* of Alfonso the Learned', *Speculum*, 33 (1958), 484–89 (p. 488).

⁴⁶ John Esten Keller, *Alfonso X, el Sabio* (New York: Twayne, 1967), pp. 92–93.

⁴⁷ See, for example, the *Códice Rico* illustrations to *Cantigas* 16, 19, 21, 25, 28, 43, 55, 69, 71, 76, 79, 84–85, 87, 110–12, 116, 122, 125, 136, 151, and 173.

⁴⁸ Keller and Cash, *Daily Life*, p. 44. Keller is thinking especially of the Parisian troubadour Rutebeuf's *Miracle de Théophile* (c. 1280), in which the Virgin Mary plays a prominent role. See *Le miracle de Théophile*, ed. by Grace Frank (Paris: Champion, 1975).

⁴⁹ Keller, 'Drama', p. 74. I cite Keller's translation, rather than that of *Las Siete Partidas*, trans. by Samuel Parsons Scott (1931), ed. by Robert I. Burns, 5 vols (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), I, 98, where '*juegos de escarnio*' is translated as 'scornful jests'. See also Keller, *Alfonso*, pp. 124–26.



Figure 10. *Cantigas de Santa María*, *Códice Rico* (MS Escorial T.I.1), first panel of the illustrations to *Cantiga* 120. Reproduced by courtesy of the Department of Special Collections, General Library System, University of Wisconsin-Madison.

the influence of an actual performance. They also note the occasional presence of musicians and, on one occasion, dancers. The first vignette of *Cantiga* 120 (Fig. 10), for example, includes (from right to left) the Virgin and Child; a kneeling Alfonso; at least five musicians playing a variety of harps, a recorder, and a bowed *vihuela*; and three men with joined hands performing a circle dance.

Summarizing (and endorsing) the general hypothesis advanced by Keller and Domínguez Rodríguez, Stern writes, 'Alfonso participated in a theater of mime;

he sang the Gospel *cantigas* to a musical accompaniment as the performers mimed the action'.⁵⁰ This seems to be as good a hypothesis as any regarding the mode of performance. Stern's assumption about the silent mimicry of the performers is consistent with the absence of dialogue in the *cantigas* of praise; the sole voice in these songs is that of the first-person royal troubador. If, as seems likely, the *Cantigas* were staged, Alfonso's role as a narrator, mediating between the audience and the presumably mimed action, would have been central to the performance.

Diego Sánchez de Badajoz

The final example permits at last a move from the realm of persuasive inferences from literary and artistic texts to firm evidence of the expository narrator in live Spanish theatre. Diego Sánchez de Badajoz was the parish priest of Talavera la Real, a village about ten miles east of Badajoz, from at least 1533 until his death in December 1549. He wrote twenty-eight *farsas* (short comedies), all but three of which were performed, in Badajoz, indoors in the cathedral during the Christmas season or outdoors on wagons during the summer festival of Corpus Christi. His collected works were published posthumously in 1554 under the title *Recopilación en metro*. Only one copy, discovered in 1860, survives.⁵¹

All his plays include a shepherd or other rustic who not only introduces the play in a lengthy prologue but remains on stage throughout, commenting on the action and frequently taking part in it himself. Unlike any of the other narrators so far considered, Sánchez's shepherd usually intervenes in plays in which live actors speak their own lines. Because of this, his role is never simply one of

⁵⁰ Stern, *Medieval Theater*, p. 138.

⁵¹ For a modern edition, see Diego Sánchez de Badajoz, *Recopilación en metro*, ed. by Frida Weber de Kurlat (Buenos Aires: Universidad de Buenos Aires, 1968). Five carefully annotated *farsas* have also been published in Diego Sánchez de Badajoz, *Farsas*, ed. by José María Díez Borque (Madrid: Cátedra, 1978). For close readings of all the plays, see Françoise Cazal, *Dramaturgia y reescritura: el teatro de Diego Sánchez de Badajoz* (Toulouse: Presses Universitaires du Mirail, 2001). For the pioneering study of the playwright's life and work, see José López Prudencio, *Diego Sánchez de Badajoz: Estudio crítico, biográfico y bibliográfico* (Madrid: Revista de Archivos, 1915). For more recent summaries of what little is known about his life and the circumstances surrounding the performance, publication, and rediscovery of his plays, see Miguel Ángel Pérez Priego, *El teatro de Diego Sánchez de Badajoz* (Cáceres: Universidad de Extremadura, 1982), pp. 9–21; Ann E. Wilttrout, *A Patron and a Playwright in Renaissance Spain: The House of Feria and Diego Sánchez de Badajoz* (London: Tamesis, 1987), pp. 65–74.

clarifying the unfolding plot. Rather, he engages in a complex interaction with and commentary on the action and dialogue on stage, constantly reminding the members of his audience that they are watching a play and directing them beyond the predominantly comic plot to the religious message for which the plot is a vehicle.

Some scholars have compared the shepherd's impact on his audience to Bertolt Brecht's *Verfremdungseffekt* (Alienation Effect).⁵² So long as it is remembered that the shepherd himself — like Don Quixote at Maese Pedro's puppet show — often fails to distinguish between the world of play and that of reality, and that Brecht's goal was not a disinterested emotional detachment but a theatre in which the spectator is emotionally and intellectually engaged to the point of being 'forced, as it were, to cast his vote',⁵³ the comparison is reasonably apt. The shepherd's presence serves to draw his audience's attention (but not his own!) to the playfulness of the play, but his role is just as frequently to draw a disinterested audience, by his own infectious example, into a fresh enthusiasm for and conversion to the play's theological message. Far from being a minor figure in the play, therefore, 'the shepherd was always the key figure around whom the entire play was based'.⁵⁴ The role was probably played by Sánchez himself.⁵⁵

The tradition of the *pastor-bobo* (foolish shepherd) did not, of course, originate with Sánchez. Drawing from multiple sources — including the shepherds of the Nativity story, the court fool, and the attitude of both the city dweller and the family farmer toward the solitary shepherd — the *pastor-bobo* was a prominent figure on the Spanish stage for a little over fifty years, beginning around 1480.⁵⁶

⁵² John Brotherton, *The Pastor-Bobo in the Spanish Theatre* (London: Tamesis, 1975), pp. 79, 81; Wilttrout, *Patron*, p. 20. For Brecht's own explanation of *Verfremdungseffekt*, see Brecht on *Theatre*, ed. and trans. by John Willett (New York: Hill and Wang, 1964), pp. 91–99, 136–47.

⁵³ Brecht, ed. and trans. by Willett, p. 39.

⁵⁴ Wilttrout, *Patron*, p. 20.

⁵⁵ Brotherton, *Pastor-Bobo*, p. 58n, 83; Wilttrout, *Patron*, p. 78.

⁵⁶ Brotherton, *Pastor-Bobo*, offers the most complete and thoughtful history of the character during this period. The comic shepherd survives, of course, in folk theatrical traditions such as the *dances* of Aragon, in which a comic Mayoral and Rabadán introduce and take part in the mock battle between Moors and Christians, and the popular Christmas *pastorela* of Mexico and the south-western United States. For the *dances*, see Ricardo del Arco y Garay, *Notas de folklore altoaragonés* (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1943); Jeanine Fribourg, *Fêtes et littérature orale en Aragon* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1996), pp. 68–69, 104–05; Max Harris, *Carnival and Other Christian Festivals* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003), pp. 29–31. For the *pastorela*, see, for example, Juan B. Rael, *The Sources and Diffusion of the Mexican Shepherds' Plays* (Mexico City: La Joyita, 1965); Robert Potter, 'The Illegal Immigration of Medieval Drama

Speaking in *sayagués*, a conventional stage jargon supposed to resemble the rural dialect of Sayago, a region to the south-west of Zamora, the traditional *pastor-bobo* was characterized by ‘laziness, greed, ignorance, superstitiousness, boorishness, obscenity and indifference’.⁵⁷ In the world of the play, he was not an actor but a passing yokel persuaded to introduce a play he barely understood.⁵⁸ He could thus — like the court fool — get away with insults and moral insights the audience might otherwise find offensive.

Sánchez made good use of this tradition. His deployment of the *pastor-bobo* is generally agreed to have been ‘more imaginative, bolder, and more consistent’ than that of his predecessors.⁵⁹ Without abandoning the role’s characteristic *sayagués*, Sánchez’s shepherd becomes more than a simple country bumpkin; he is also a wise fool who remains on stage after the prologue to act, at times, as a perceptive exegete and commentator.

Others have explored, in greater detail than space will allow here, the various creative ways in which Sánchez employs his shepherd.⁶⁰ We must reluctantly confine ourselves to discussion of two plays: a brief summary of the *Farsa de Ysaac*, in which the Shepherd typically delivers the prologue, introduces the characters, disrupts the play, comments on the action, draws various morals, and sings the final carol; and a detailed reading of the more atypical (and very impressive) *Farsa del juego de cañas espiritual*, in which the Shepherd is one of three narrators who — astonishingly — make up the play’s entire cast.

The *Farsa de Ysaac* is a short Corpus Christi play based on the biblical narrative of the deception of Isaac, in which the elderly patriarch is tricked into blessing Jacob instead of Esau (Genesis 27. 1–40).⁶¹ The Shepherd, in keeping with the

to California’, *Comparative Drama*, 27 (1993), 140–58; Richard R. Flores, *Los Pastores: History and Performance in the Mexican Shepherds’ Play of South Texas* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995).

⁵⁷ Brotherton, *Pastor-Bobo*, p. ix.

⁵⁸ Wilttrout, *Patron*, p. 79.

⁵⁹ Brotherton, *Pastor-Bobo*, p. 132. See also Donna Gustafson, ‘The Role of the Shepherd in the Pre-Lopean Drama of Diego Sánchez de Badajoz’, *Bulletin of the Comediantes*, 25 (1973), 5–13.

⁶⁰ Gustafson, ‘Role of the Shepherd’; Brotherton, *Pastor-Bobo*, pp. 74–94, 132–43, 180–88; Wilttrout, *Patrons*, pp. 75–101; Cazal, *Dramaturgia y reescritura*.

⁶¹ For the text of the play, see Sánchez, *Recopilación*, ed. by Weber, pp. 393–402. For detailed commentary and an examination of the relationship between the play and the biblical text, see Cazal, *Dramaturgia y reescritura*, pp. 297–310, 625–56.

theme of trickery, begins the prologue by playing a verbal trick on his audience. 'Hello there, your honors!' he says, as he walks on stage. 'Do you want to know why I've come? I tell you I don't come for nothing [. . .], and I've forgotten the plot! What a short memory I have! Do you think you've understood me? Well, you've not grasped everything. I swear by myself that I've not come for nothing: I know that, in the grammatical sense, two noes make a yes' (lines 1–10).⁶² By pretending to a characteristically poor memory and using a double negative, he has fooled the audience into thinking him a typically ignorant *pastor-bobo*. But he's smarter than they think: he knows that 'two noes make a yes'. He's come for something. Having established his intellectual superiority, he tells them to pay attention.

Like the puppeteer's assistant in *Don Quijote*, the Shepherd introduces the play's cast of characters, who, in this case, are with him on the wagon-stage: 'Do you see the patriarch Isaac and Rebekah, his wife? Do you see Jacob and Esau, their twin sons?' (lines 24–27). Then, taking a seat at the side of the stage (line 41), he tells the members of the audience to listen carefully: they'll find in the story both a figure of the Holy Sacrament and an illustration of the blindness of the Jews.

The ensuing action follows the biblical narrative closely, albeit frequently interrupted by the Shepherd. When Jacob brings two small goats to Rebekah, so she can make a stew for Isaac, the Shepherd immediately suspects that the goats have been stolen from his own flock. He snatches them back, provoking a fierce quarrel with Rebekah and Jacob. Rebekah has to restrain Jacob from punching the Shepherd ('hijo, no quiero puñadas', line 152), an episode that can be interpreted as a scripted expression of the character Jacob's short temper or as the frustration of the actor playing Jacob at the foolish Shepherd's disruption of the play. 'Don't you know anything?' he asks the Shepherd contemptuously (line 144).⁶³ The Shepherd is finally persuaded to return the goats when Rebekah shows him the markings on the animals' ears.

When Rebekah instructs Jacob in deceit, the Shepherd confronts the audience: 'Have you noticed her audacity? [. . .] Do you see her deceptive love?' He uses the occasion to moralize about over-indulgent mothers. When Jacob takes the stew to Isaac, the Shepherd mutters his disapproving commentary, interpreting Isaac's

⁶² I have made no attempt, in my translations from Sánchez's plays, to capture either the *sayagués* dialect of the shepherds or the rhythms and rhyme schemes of the verse.

⁶³ Wilttrout, *Patron*, p. 84.

failed sight, taste, touch, and smell as an emblem of Jewish insensitivity to Christian truth. Switching targets, he also compares it to the inability of the Christian to sense, except by faith, anything more than bread in the holy sacrament. He then prepares the audience for the next stage of the plot: 'Now, you'll hear the blessing' (line 274). Finally, he closes the play with a song, reminding the members of his audience that, unlike Esau, they do not lack a blessing, 'for, since his passion, God dwells in our midst' (lines 376–77).

In other plays, after delivering the prologue, the Shepherd may be incorporated into the action as a character in his own right rather than as an unwelcome intruder. But, in general, the *Farsa de Ysaac* is fairly representative of Sánchez's craft. The *Farsa del juego de cañas espiritual* (Play of the Spiritual Game of Canes) is not.⁶⁴ For all that its cast of visible characters consists only of three narrators — a Shepherd, a highland Shepherdess, and a Sibyl — it is one of Sánchez's most complex and successful compositions. A Christmas play, originally staged in the Cathedral of Saint John the Baptist in Badajoz, it deserves close attention and even revival.

The play's structure is deceptively simple. The action, as the stage directions repeatedly affirm, remains 'hidden', taking place in the enclosed cathedral choir, where it can be heard but not seen by the audience in the outer nave. Modern readers might at first suspect a dubious kinship with the invisible (and fraudulent) puppet play in Cervantes's *Retablo de maravillas*. The action in Sánchez's play, however, remains invisible not because the members of the audience are being hoodwinked, but because they are being educated about a spiritual world that does, in fact, remain largely unseen.

There was a practical reason, too, for keeping the dramatic action out of sight. The play conceives of the spiritual battle between virtues and vices in terms of a *juego de cañas*, a spectacle of Moorish origin, akin to the tournament *mêlée* but fought on horseback with spears made of canes.⁶⁵ To have staged anything like a real *juego de cañas* would have been impossible inside Badajoz cathedral. It would also have been beyond Sánchez's dramaturgical means: he worked on a small scale. Confined to the words of the Sibyl and the imaginations of the members of the audience, however, the allegorical *juego de cañas* serves its dramatic purpose remarkably well.

⁶⁴ For the text of the play, see Sánchez, *Recopilación*, ed. by Weber, pp. 513–28.

⁶⁵ Max Harris, *Aztecs, Moors, and Christians: Festivals of Reconquest in Mexico and Spain* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000), pp. 54–58.

The play advances from a comparatively quiet and orderly beginning to a tumultuous close, transforming its characters (and, by intention, its audience) along the way. It begins with a brief prologue, in which the Shepherd calls on his audience to wake up, advice that has both practical and spiritual application. 'Those of you who are sleeping, wake up!' he says. 'Don't you know why I've come? To tell you that God's been born, that it's Christmas. [...] Try hard to understand me' (lines 2–10). Using language from the audience's immediate world of crop cycles and card-playing as well as from theology and scripture, he reminds the spectators of their sins and of God's readiness to show mercy. He is, at this stage, more of a preacher than a fool. It is the audience that, at least in the Shepherd's opinion, has inherited the *pastor-bobo's* traditional propensity to laziness.⁶⁶

A large candle, hanging from a metal thread so that it seems suspended in mid-air, is suddenly ignited, startling the Shepherd. Its light is magnified and directed downward by a tin reflector.⁶⁷ Frightened, the Shepherd reverts to type, expressing both cowardice ('It might hurt my hair!') and ignorance ('What is it? What is it?'), while still functioning as an interpreter, asking and answering questions on behalf of the audience: 'O light that comes from heaven, speak; where are you hung? Oh, it's not suspended from anything!' (lines 64–71).

The Sibyl, 'in the form of an angel', enters. Calmly and seriously, she goes to her chair, which is situated 'in a high place, such that she dominates all and can be seen by all'.⁶⁸ The Shepherd, still a little frightened, tells the members of the audience where to look and interprets what they see: 'Oh, my God! [...] See, starting to appear over there, a [...] what? [...] Look, look! [...] Oh, what an extraordinary lady! Do you see, do you see, she wants to sit down? I tell you [...] it must be the Sibyl, who wants to sing something to us' (lines 73–81). The Sibyl, 'in a loud voice, half singing [her lines] in the measured tone' in which psalms were

⁶⁶ Cazal, *Dramaturgia y reescritura*, p. 171.

⁶⁷ The candle ('un blandón o hacha ardiendo pendiente de un hilo de hierro con su hoja de lata encima, de arte que parezca que se tiene en el ayre') is described in the opening stage direction: Sánchez, *Recopilación*, ed. by Weber, p. 513. For a full English paraphrase of the opening stage direction and a brief discussion of the play, see N. D. Shergold, *A History of the Spanish Stage from Medieval Times until the End of the Seventeenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), pp. 45–46. For a discussion of the medieval stage manager's 'understanding of the principle of reflection to increase illumination', see Philip Butterworth, *Theatre of Fire* (London: Society for Theatre Research, 1998), pp. 63–68.

⁶⁸ The appearance of the Sibyl and the location of her chair are described in the opening stage direction.

sung,⁶⁹ announces an imminent *juego de cañas*. The Shepherd is thrilled ('We're going to have a *juego de cañas*! God, we'll have fun!'). Then, he calls to the Shepherdess and, in the ensuing dialogue, prepares the members of the audience to hear rather than see the promised action: 'Hey, sweetie! Hey!' 'What do you want?' 'Come here, let's listen from here.' 'We're not going over there to watch, are we, just to see if [the horses] know how to turn quickly?' 'It's not something you can see. Listen and pay attention' (lines 88–94).

All three narrators are now in place. The Sibyl is on her elevated seat, with a view into the choir, while the Shepherd and Shepherdess are lower down, *on a stage where the audience can see them*.⁷⁰ There are thus three levels of mediation between the audience and the invisible action about to unfold. The Sibyl, from her privileged position, is the only one who can see the action, reporting it to an audience that, in this respect, includes both the Shepherd and the Shepherdess. The Shepherd is more knowledgeable than the Shepherdess, able to ask questions of the Sibyl and comment on her narrative. The Shepherdess, also called the Mountain Girl (*Serrana*), is initially more akin to the traditional *pastor-bobo*: she finds the action difficult to follow, asks foolish questions of the Shepherd, and prefers erotic songs and dances to the invisible spiritual narrative.

The *juego de cañas* does not begin immediately, for its spiritual message requires further preparation of the audience. The Sibyl announces the first of the unseen actors. 'Singing like one who makes an important public announcement but without being seen', John the Baptist — to whom the cathedral is dedicated — delivers his message in Latin: 'Dirigite viam Domini, rectas facite yn solitudine semitas Dei nostri' (Prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the wilderness a highway for our God, Isaiah 40. 3). The Shepherd is impressed. He asks the Sibyl to 'clarify for us' the name of the herald and the nature of his announcement. The Sibyl explains that this is 'Saint John' and 'his divine message is for your salvation, [telling you] that you should straighten the way so that the divine Child can be born in your heart' (lines 106–11). The Shepherd resolves to drive all 'wickedness from his soul and will', so that his 'corrupt flesh' may pose no obstacle for the coming Christ.

John the Baptist repeats his message, but the Shepherdess doesn't understand. Mistaking the saint for a hawker, she says, 'Someone's trying to make some money'. The Shepherd sinks to his partner's level for a moment: 'Proclaiming,

⁶⁹ Cazal, *Dramaturgia y reescritura*, p. 172.

⁷⁰ The stage directions do not make clear whether the Shepherdess has been on stage all along, waiting silently, or whether she appears only when she first speaks.

singing, weeping, they're all done for money.' But the Sibyl rescues the conversation, telling them that St John brings news of something worth far more than money, namely eternal life.

The Sibyl then introduces 'a great crowd of *foliones* [performers of the rowdy Portuguese communal song and dance known as the *folia*],⁷¹ prophets and patriarchs, all of them together in a dance singing their songs of hope to an unseen melody' (lines 134–48). Accompanied by tambourines and a drum, 'those who are hidden in the choir, where no one can see them', make merry and sing, to a popular *folia* tune, 'Whoever hopes will not despair, if his hope is true' (lines 151–52). Adam, Noah, Abraham, David, Isaiah, and Jeremiah then take turns to sing, to the same melody, a suitable verse in praise of the Virgin or of Christ. The Sibyl names each prophet before he sings. At the end of each solo, the whole group again sings the refrain and dances joyfully. The Shepherd expresses his appreciation. Albeit unseen, it must have been one of the liveliest *Ordines Prophetarum* in medieval drama.

After the last prophet has sung, the Shepherdess joins her companion in blessing God. She says she'd like to sing as well. The Shepherd agrees: 'We're as good as they are' (line 263). John the Baptist repeats his cue, which the Sibyl explains further by advocating baptism, penance, and the rule of reason over the senses as the best means of straightening the ways of the heart. But the Shepherdess has missed the point. She dances 'hand in hand' with the Shepherd, while together they sing a refrain from a vulgar Christmas song ('Don't teach me any more, or you'll kill me'). The Shepherdess sings a verse by herself: 'A nun was in a convent, her little white titties under a black veil' (lines 276–85). The Shepherd stops, realizing the impropriety of the song. This is the kind of thing, he says, they must flee, if they are to prepare their hearts for Christ.

Then, from the choir, come the sounds of stone being struck as if men were digging. Hidden voices sing lines from the hymn 'Sacris Solemniis', composed by Thomas Aquinas for the office of Corpus Christi: 'Recedant vetera, nova sint omnia, corda, voces, et opera' (Let old things fade and all be new, our hearts, our voices, and our works). The Shepherd asks the Sibyl to explain the Latin words 'in our common tongue'. She speaks of the replacement of the old law with the new

⁷¹ For *folia*, see Percy A. Scholes, *The Oxford Companion to Music*, 7th edn (London: Oxford University Press, 1947), pp. 326–27. In Galicia and other parts of western Spain, *foliões*, like the synonymous Portuguese *foliões*, still designate the companies of masked and costumed merry-makers that parade through the streets during Carnival. See Maria da Conceição Vilhena, 'Sobre a origem dos foliões', *Boletim do Instituto Histórico da Ilha Terceira*, 43 (1985), 227–41; Harris, *Carnival*, pp. 146, 241 n. 37.

doctrines of Christianity. 'But, who are those we heard digging?' asks the Shepherd. The Sibyl tells him they are the apostles, martyrs, and confessors, who, by the example of their lives and teachings, 'make flat roads on which Christians can conquer temptation' (lines 304–24). All very well, replies the Shepherd, but as we travel the road, we tend to lie down with the vices and steer clear of the virtues.

This is the cue for the allegorical *juego de cañas* to begin. 'Do you see them?' asks the Sibyl, describing the arrival of the Seven Sins, led by their captain Lucifer. All are on horseback, masked, and dressed in multicoloured clothes (lines 334–42). Trumpets sound in the choir. Unseen actors run from one side to another, making a loud noise with small bells, as if a troop of finely caparisoned horses were passing. The Shepherd and Shepherdess sing another carol, this time — more appropriately — about the dishonesty of false lovers and the deceit of sin.

Again the Sibyl asks, 'Do you see them?' But she is now describing, to the same offstage noises, the arrival of the Seven Virtues, the grandest knights she has ever seen. 'Jesus Christ is their captain', she says, 'and the cross is their banner' (lines 360–61). The Shepherd and Shepherdess join the Sibyl in singing an even more appropriate refrain, 'Gloria in excelsis Deo'.

The noise increases. Bells are galloped from one side to another, as before, but now the audience can also hear 'great blows on shields as if [the unseen knights] were fighting with canes'. Trumpets and drums roar. The excited Sibyl urges the audience, above the din, 'Do you see, do you see how skillfully they joust? Let's see, trumpets, quick, quick!' (lines 374–75). Those in the choir *play the trumpets and drums for the space of an Ave María, and then all stop*. The Shepherd and Shepherdess dance again, singing, 'Many are the players. May the best men win!'

Further 'tumult' ensues, as the battle continues. Swept up in the action, no longer emotionally distant, the Sibyl says, 'Oh, what a valiant conflict the passions are waging, in the human heart, against the virtues! May Jesus Christ defend us! [...] They're hurling [cane-spears] from all sides. [...] Look out, look out, Holy Mary!' The Shepherdess is listening carefully now. 'Someone's fallen and broken his head', she says. The Sibyl tells her, 'It's Pride who's fallen'. Speaking directly to the Sibyl for the first time, the Shepherdess asks, 'Who did it?' The Shepherd echoes his companion: 'So who did it?' The Sibyl answers, 'Humility pulled him down'. The three narrators rejoice: 'Lucifer's just a little guy, after all!' 'Bye-bye bad times!' 'Hey, it's a holiday, a holiday, hey, the day of the Child, the cute little one, the pretty little one!' (lines 378–95). Jubilant voices in the choir sing, 'en faburdón' ('in faburden', a style of harmonically ornamented plainsong),⁷² the

⁷² For faburden, see Scholes, *Oxford Companion to Music*, pp. 305–06.

lines from the Magnificat, 'Deposuit potentes de sede et exaltavit humiles' (He has put down the mighty from their seat and exalted the humble).

And so it continues: the noise of battle resumes; Generosity defeats Avarice; the Shepherd and Shepherdess express their joy in song and dance; Chastity defeats Lechery; the choir sings again in lively faburden, their Latin explained by the Sibyl. Having reached the vice to which the Shepherd and Shepherdess (and, perhaps, the audience they represent) are most prone, Sánchez is careful not to dilute his conclusion by extending it too far. Rather than have each succeeding virtue individually defeat its corresponding vice, he has the Sibyl announce a general flight: 'Lucifer is in retreat, his power weakened. Long live patience! Anger is fleeing! What a ruckus, what grace! Envy, Laziness, and Gluttony are fleeing behind them!' The Shepherd and Shepherdess cheer. The jubilant Sibyl continues, 'Long live the Lord Jesus Christ, you, you, you, God and man, man and God, who grants us such great grace! May your love prevail, we with you and you with us. Come on, everyone: give thanks to God!' (lines 480–94).

The unseen choir sings a polyphonic 'Deo gracias'. The Shepherd and Shepherdess, now both fully converted, jubilate. The Shepherd gives thanks for victory: 'O, give thanks to the eternal God! Our captain, born of you, Virgin, has conquered the prince of hell.' The Shepherdess compares the devil to a mountaineer (*montaraz*) who has fallen and broken his head, thereby bringing the rest of us great solace (*solaz*). Unable to find words sufficient to contain her joy, she ends by repeating an almost meaningless syllable (a contraction of 'gracias', perhaps) derived from her rhyme scheme: 'gaz, gaz, gaz, gaz, gaz, gaz, gaz'. As the three narrators leave, the unseen choir takes up the chorus, singing polyphonically, 'Gaz, gaz, gaz, gaz, gaz, gaz, gaz, gaz, gaz, gaz, gaz, gaz, gaz' (lines 495–507). One imagines the audience lending their voices and their clapping hands to this joyous finale.

The *Farsa del juego de cañas espiritual* is an extraordinary dramaturgical tour de force. With only three actors and a very energetic offstage crew of singers and sound men, Sánchez has drawn his audience into a lively rendition of the battle in the human heart between Christ and his virtues, on the one hand, and the devil and his demonic vices, on the other hand.⁷³ With a cast made up entirely of narrators, he has staged a tumultuous *juego de cañas*, enabling his audience to hear

⁷³ For the argument that the battle between virtues and vices in medieval drama was generally understood to represent both an internal struggle within the human heart and an external supernatural battle between Christ and demonic forces led by Satan, see Max Harris, 'Flesh and Spirits: The Battle Between Virtues and Vices in Medieval Drama Reassessed', *Medium Aevum*, 57 (1988), 56–64.

the noise of battle and to imagine the galloping of hooves, the clouds of dust, and the pounding of cane-spears on shields, all the while without moving from the nave of Badajoz cathedral.

During the course of the play, his characters have changed radically. In the beginning, the dignified Sibyl was characterized by her 'calm and serious' demeanour and the chanted delivery of her lines. The Shepherd oscillated between a tendency to lecture his audience and an instinctive inclination to retreat into the cowardice, ignorance, and vulgarity of the traditional *pastor-bobo*. The Shepherdess outdid the Shepherd in all these qualities, compounding them with a stolid disinterest. Gradually, however, the Sibyl has lightened up, the Shepherd has grown more consistently spiritual, and the Shepherdess has taken a lively interest in what's going on in the choir. All three have become more excited by the unfolding action, finally coming together in an exuberant and rowdy song of praise to God. Clearly, Sánchez intended his three narrators to guide their audience along a similar trajectory, from moral disinterest to spiritual conversion.

Conclusion

It is likely that the expository narrator had a long history in the live Spanish theatre long before he disappeared from everything but the puppet theatre. The scant evidence of his existence is, in all probability, due to the accidents of preservation and rediscovery of texts and to the piecemeal evidence of early Castilian theatre in general rather than to his actual rarity at the time. The evidence from Ibn Quzmān's *zaḡal* and Sánchez's *sfarsas* is known only because of the rediscovery of a single text of each poet's works. The probable role of Alfonso X as narrator in dramatizations of the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* is known only because the manuscripts of the poems were lavishly illustrated. Even the certainty of the narrator's prevalence in the Spanish puppet theatre is due to fictional literary accounts rather than to eye-witness testimonies. It is impossible to know how many other texts, now lost or waiting to be rediscovered, also bore witness to an expository narrator; or, since theatre is an essentially ephemeral art, how many narrators were never recorded in texts at all.

This being the case, it is hard to generalize from such little evidence. It can, perhaps, be concluded that the narrator was a creation of necessity, allowing more to be accomplished with minimal means than would otherwise have been possible. This is especially true in the case of Sánchez's *Farsa del juego de cañas espiritual*, where the playwright made a virtue of necessity, fashioning a play that, even today,

is remarkable for the imaginative scale of what he was able to achieve with so few means. But it is also true of puppeteers, whose puppets lack the emotional range of live actors, and, perhaps, of Ibn Quzmān's jongleur, whose performers may have been skilled musicians, singers, mimics, and dancers, but may also have lacked training in the very different skill of delivering lines of dialogue convincingly.

The expository narrator also allowed the playwright to shape the relationship between audience and stage in ways that are not readily available to the director of a self-contained play. Wary of the uncontrolled live theatre, Alfonso X was able to channel audience response to the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* towards devotion to the Virgin Mary through his own authoritative role as narrator. Working with a much less sophisticated audience than Alfonso X had done, Sánchez was able to bridge the gap between the everyday world of his audience and the sometimes obscure theology of the Church through a series of shepherd narrators, who alternated with dizzying speed between the roles of stand-up comic, learned exegete, pious moralist, ignorant spectator, and exemplary convert.

The comparison, drawn by some scholars, between Sánchez's inventive use of the shepherd narrator and Brecht's deliberate cultivation of the *Verfremdungseffekt* in the mid-twentieth century also helps modern readers to avoid the mistake of regarding the expository narrator as a necessarily 'primitive' theatrical role. He may have disappeared from the literary (but not the popular) stage as the self-contained play became increasingly fashionable, beginning with the Italian Renaissance and culminating with the Naturalist drama of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. But the more recent theatrical experiments of directors as different in style as Brecht and Peter Brook — to name just two of the most prominent — have radically expanded ideas of what is both permissible and possible in the theatre. Now might be an opportune time to revive some of the best roles of early Spanish dramatic narrators. Very different in style from one another, but equally enticing, Alfonso X's *Cantigas de Santa Maria* and Sánchez's *farsas* would be a good place to start.

MASQUEING THE MORAL EXPOSITOR IN THE MACRO PLAYS

Milla Cozart Riggio

Theatre is an art form; it is also a social institution. By favoring a certain style of representation and a particular etiquette of reception, the institutional setting of a performance informs and focuses the meaning of a dramatic text and facilitates the dissemination of that meaning through the collective activity of the audience.¹

Introduction

When in the late fifteenth-century English morality play known as *Wisdom Who Is Christ* Lucifer ironically warns the personified human faculty of Wyll to 'trust not þes prechors, for þey be not goode' (line 488),² he poses an intriguing staging problem. Who and where are these preachers? Lucifer is alone on the stage with Mynde, Wyll, and Understanding, the three human faculties or Mightes who are the objects of his seduction. He might be speaking of 'prechors' in general, but the demonstrative 'þes' indicates a gesture to someone in particular. Apart from Mynde, Wyll, and Understanding themselves (clearly not in question), the only preacher in the play is the absent Wisdom; both his absence and the plural reference rule Wisdom out. Lucifer must, then, be pointing to 'prechors', perhaps chaplains or clerics of any kind, in the audience.

¹ Michael Bristol, *Carnival and Theater: Plebeian Culture and the Structure of Authority in Renaissance England* (New York: Routledge, 1989), p. 3.

² Quotations from *Wisdom* will be taken from *The Play of Wisdom: Its Texts and Contexts*, ed. by Milla Cozart Riggio (New York: AMS Press, 1998).

Lucifer's exhortation highlights two closely related features of English morality plays, which taken together with the cosmological assumptions on which they depend help to explain the expository nature of the drama and the roles of expositors and narrators in that drama:³ 1. *The preaching function*; 2. *The direct link between the audience and the actors*; 3. *The common cosmology*.

The Preaching Function

As an allegorical moral play, *Wisdom* is by its very nature expository and hortatory, linking teaching to preaching. Like the French *moralités* from which the English genre takes its modern name, the play aims, as Alan Hindley has defined it elsewhere in this volume, to teach and, through teaching, to preach.⁴ Presuming an audience of like-minded, though backsliding, Christians, this preaching aims not to convert but to re-call the audience through the workings of the conscience and reminders of mortality to the path of obedience that jointly reinforces their status as believers and as good citizens, while often satirically warning them of the dangers of their modern, acquisitive bad habits.

To this end, characters like Lucifer or his counterpart Wisdom (who is Christ) act as expositors with a narrative function. They tell the story; explicate the figural exempla; exhort, cajole, and warn not only the characters in the play but the viewers as well. They occasionally refer to themselves or characters they are addressing directly in the third person; and the vicious characters — reminiscent again of the French *moralités*, or of the tyrants and villains (the Cains and Herods) of the

³ This paper does not consider the question of the prompter in the plays it will analyse, as there is no evidence in the play texts or the one stage plan of a prompter. However, in a situation where instead of asking for the suspension of disbelief, the play demands that the audience be directly involved in the world of the drama, a visible or half visible prompter *with a text in his hands* could remind the viewer of the textual lessons embedded in the figural, presentational aspect of moral allegories that dramatize the 'reality' of life as essentially interior or transcendent. The significance of texts in general will be discussed later in this paper. A prompter's visible text could reinforce this perspective; it is important to this argument to note that such a role could also serve rather than disrupt the dramatic rhythm of these plays.

⁴ See Alan Hindley, "La prédication par personnages"? Expositor Figures in the *Moralités*, in this volume. To the function of teaching 'in matters of Christian doctrine [and] religious polemics', Hindley adds 'or even secular ethics', thus highlighting one central difference between the Catholic English fifteenth-century morality and its somewhat more secular or at least more classically influenced French counterpart.

English mystery cycles — sometimes warn the audience against themselves.⁵ Such characters emulate the role of the preachers Lucifer cautions against, whose styles they often copy.⁶

The Direct Link Between the Audience and the Actors

When a character like Lucifer points to ‘prechors’ in the audience, he does not momentarily break the barrier between the audience and the drama as much as he illustrates that such a barrier does not essentially exist. The movement from the fictional world of the drama to the actual world of the audience is fluid and continuous; indeed, as illustrated by Lucifer in *Wisdom*, the actors specify audience members *as if they were in the play*. Textual allusions and pointers designate not only the expected audience but also the likely venue for the drama. Similarities and differences in the forms of teaching and preaching affect the ways expositors and narrators engage their audiences in different venues.

⁵ Hindley calls this ‘auto-presentational mode’ *ekphrasis*, a term he takes from Werner Helmich, *Moralités françaises: Réimpression fac-simile de vingt-deux pièces allégoriques imprimées au XV^e et XVI^e siècles* (Geneva: Editions Slatkine, 1980), I, 1–110; cited by Hindley in this volume.

⁶ For studies that deal with the influence of preaching on medieval drama, see Hindley in this volume and Nerida Newbigin, ‘Directing the Gaze: Expository Modes in Late Medieval Italian Plays’, both in this volume. The prime study for the influence of preaching on English medieval literature remains that of Gerald R. Owst, *Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England: A Neglected Chapter in the History of English Letters & of the English People* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1933; rev. repr. 1961). This study was challenged by two reviewers of the revised edition: Leonard E. Boyle, *Medium Aevum*, 33 (1964), 228–30, and A. G. Little, *English Historical Review*, 49 (1964), 115–16. Marianne Briscoe, in her substantial contribution to the topic, briefly analyses the rhetorical strategies of Mercy in the Macro play *Mankind* while mentioning in passing a passage from *The Castle of Perseverance*, pointing out that the vernacular sermon collection *Jacobs Well* was one source document for *Mankind*, and concluding that ‘understanding more about the incidence of rhetorical strategy, sermonic voice, preacherly personifications, and other dimensions of popular medieval sermons can greatly enhance our understanding of medieval English drama’ (‘Preaching and Medieval English Drama’, in *Contexts for Early English Drama*, ed. by Marianne G. Briscoe and John C. Coldeway (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), pp. 151–72, quotation at p. 167). However, in her suggestion that ‘sermon influence’ (as in *The Castle of Perseverance*) ‘interrupt[s] the flow of dramatic action’ (p. 160), Briscoe assumes a different concept of ‘dramatic flow’ from that which informs this paper, in which figural explication and direct exposition are presumed to be vital aspects of the *dramatic* structure itself.

The Common Cosmology

The kinds of issues to be dealt with here are not limited to specific morality plays; they are characteristic of the genre, particularly of Catholic morality drama and, thus, of English moral plays written throughout the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.⁷ They apply also to English Corpus Christi cycle plays, cycle and passion plays elsewhere, and other forms of Catholic and even some Protestant allegorical drama in Europe in the late Middle Ages. Other traditions studied in this volume — particularly the French *moralités* (Hindley)⁸ — provide a referential frame of comparison to illustrate some of the common assumptions that cross the generic and national boundaries of the late Middle Ages, while also differentiating these traditions from one another.

Cosmologically, the universe itself was imbued with the divine presence. In the Augustinian terms in which much medieval Catholic drama was cast, reality was still defined as the unseen essence linking the transcendent spirit of God to the interior human soul, rather than a feature of phenomenological, material existence.

⁷ Since David Bevington's seminal *From Mankind to Marlowe: Growth of Structure in the Popular Drama of Tudor England* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962), it has been customary to think of the progression and development from the Catholic morality plays of the fifteenth century through their Protestant counterparts in the sixteenth century, leading to Marlowe. However, despite the similarities in plot structure and narrative development, the world view underlying the Catholic dramas differs in key respects from that of the Protestant plays, particularly those with named and identified authors. This study considers only anonymously composed English Catholic morality drama of the fifteenth century.

⁸ In some important respects, the exposition in English Catholic morality drama also resembles that which Elsa Streitman in this volume associates with the Dutch Rhetoricians plays. Ultimately, of course, Dutch traditions directly influence the English, as evidenced in *Everyman*, the English translation of the Dutch *Elckerlijc* (composed c. 1470). Certain features of the Rhetoricians plays described by Streitman fit the English Catholic morality structure aptly, as for instance the fact that the expositors and narrators tend to be characters with other roles in the play, rather than isolated dramatis personae outside the frame of the drama; the mutual emphasis on 'their educational values' pertaining in part 'to religion, to morality, to behaviour [...] as well as to the relationship of the individual with God'; and the 'multitude of diverse, visual and verbal, tactics and devices to disseminate their messages', including 'different verse forms, registers, structures, decors, costumes, gestures, poses, and pictures'. These similarities, together with a reliance on textual authority and use of rhetorical exempla, bring these two traditions together as well, though the Rhetoricians' reliance on classical story and more frequent explication of their own methodology also exemplify differences in the two traditions. Streitman, of course, is focussing on a tradition that extended through the sixteenth century; if this study expanded to include English moral interludes of the sixteenth century, the comparison would resonate somewhat differently.

Personified abstractions like the Soul, Mercy, or Virtues and Vices embodied and gave physical form to the interior and transcendent world presumed to be more 'real' for the audience than their own everyday lives.⁹ The audience and actors were, in Martin Stevens's terms, mutually 'implicated in the [...] spiritual history' that the drama enacts. In this arena, European medieval actors and audience were jointly players in what Stevens defined as a 'Theatrum Mundi' that not only symbolically signified the world it represented, but also replicated it. Though Stevens's link between the geography of early theatrical spaces and that conceptualized by mapmakers is mainly useful for *The Castle of Perseverance* (the first play to be analysed in this study), the notion of inscribing the world within a presumed theatrical space shared by audience and actors helps to explain the centrality of direct exposition and narration in plays that reify the process of sin and salvation within a theologized Christian cosmology.¹⁰ Actors could thus address the audience in medieval Christian drama at virtually any moment of the play, without breaking the dramatic rhythm of the Drama.¹¹

Particularizing Difference Within Similarities — the Focus of this Paper

Rather than offering a survey or overview of teaching and preaching strategies throughout English morality plays, this study focuses on how expositors and narrators establish connections with their presumed audience in specific plays designed for particular kinds of venues. To this end, the paper analyses three plays literally bound together: *The Castle of Perseverance*, *Mankind*, and *Wisdom Who Is Christ*, collectively known as the Macro Plays. Not only are these plays conveniently bound into one manuscript (Washington, D.C., Folger Shakespeare Library, Folger MS V.a.354), but collectively they also constitute most of what remains of

⁹ To the extent to which the moral plays to be considered here — and particularly *Wisdom* — focus on the interior life, they also reflect the increasing attention given the individual conscience in the fifteenth century, particularly in the post-Wycliffite English climate. This will be noted later in this paper.

¹⁰ See Martin Stevens, 'From *Mappa Mundi* to *Theatrum Mundi*: The World as Stage in Early English Drama', in *From Page to Performance: Essays in Early English Drama*, ed. by John A. Alford (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1995), pp. 25–50. Stevens uses actual maps, such as the Hereford Map or the Ebstorf Map, to illustrate his thesis that the mapped world is often inscribed into the playing space.

¹¹ Stevens, 'From *Mappa Mundi* to *Theatrum Mundi*', p. 27.

anonymously composed fifteenth-century English morality drama;¹² moreover, they span the fifteenth century, roughly from *The Castle of Perseverance* (composed c. 1425) to *Wisdom* (a late Yorkist or early Tudor play probably composed in the late 1470s or 1480s).

Typically, the Macro Plays both engage and distance the audience through characters whose roles involve extensive self-definition and direct audience address. Such expositors include those who represent the forces of 'good' (such as 'Pater sedens in Trono' in *The Castle of Perseverance*, Mercy in *Mankind*, or Christ as Wisdom in *Wisdom*), those who embody evil (such as Mundus, Belyal, and Caro in *The Castle of Perseverance*, Tityvillus in *Mankind*, or Lucifer in *Wisdom*), and those to be tempted who define their own natures (such as Humanum Genus in *The Castle of Perseverance*, Mankynde in *Mankind*, and Mynde, Understanding, and Wyll — though not the central character of Anima herself — in *Wisdom*). Such expositors stand both inside and outside of the drama: they play their roles; they fill the costumes; they interact with other characters. But at the same time, they define themselves to and for the audience, with whom they have a direct line of communication. Thus, they serve as a liaison between the world of the play and that of the audience, helping to define the stage as simultaneously a mirror of and the conscience for a world that is itself symbolically encapsulated within the theatrical space.

The Macro Plays have much in common in terms of theme, image, and character, and they share the three-part morality play plot, which moves from the state of Grace to the world of sin and back again. However, they markedly differ in the presumptions they make about playing space and audience, as evidenced in the ways expository characters use the space and approach the audience. Comparing the roles of expositors and narrators in these three plays thus provides an opportunity to examine the varying demands of venues and playing groups ranging from

¹² Indeed, when one considers anonymously written Catholic morality plays of the fifteenth century (allegorical moral plays narrating the temptation of a single representative human figure, the battle between good and evil as a kind of psychomachia, with redemption depending on the call for mercy), discounting saints plays, conversion plays, and other non-cycle historical and biblical drama, the Macro Plays in themselves account for an overwhelming percentage of such plays extant in England, with the fragmentary *Pride of Life* (probably from the late fourteenth century) and *Everyman*, translated from the Dutch, as the only other likely options. There are a few comparable anonymous plays such as *The Interlude of Youth* or *Mundus et Infans* from the early sixteenth century. Though the form remained popular, the growth of humanism in England, the introduction of Protestantism, the evolution of authorship away from anonymity, and the move towards commercial theatre substantially affected the nature of morality drama.

large town commons to dining halls of great houses, or from small, probably itinerant groups of players who easily double in their roles to players no doubt trained as members of the chapel of a large household capable of mounting a good-sized play cast without doubling.

To get at this difference in the absence of performance records one must read each play text for what it initially was (and what it remains for modern performers): a performance script.¹³ Initial questions include the following: What does the text yield about likely performance and performance venues? What is the text directing its players to do, what kind of playing group were those players likely to be part of, and whom does it presume to be its audience? How much 'direct address' is there? In what mediating relationship between the audience and the play do the expository characters like Mercy, Wisdom, Tityvillus, or Lucifer stand? When and how do they look simultaneously inside the drama and outside the play? And, finally, in what ways do the plays more deeply and subtly engage the audience in the moral message of the drama? This paper will now attempt both to answer and to assess the implications of these questions with reference to the expository nature of the Macro Plays.

The Castle of Perseverance

Trumpe up and lete vs pace.¹⁴

Probably composed no later than 1425, *The Castle of Perseverance* is the earliest of the Macro Plays. Though there are no production records (nor incidental evidence of performance) for any of the Macro Plays, the manuscript of *The Castle of Perseverance* also contains a detailed stage plan and a set of Banns that announce the upcoming performance a week hence of an elaborate travelling play: 'we purpose us to playe | þis day seuenenyt before 3ou in syth | At . . . [place designation] on þe grene in ryal array' (lines 132–34). Two 'vexillators', literally 'standard

¹³ This statement does not imply that the texts preserved in early manuscripts, and extant today, were necessarily the texts performed. However, whether the particular text was used for performance or not, it serves the function of a script in that the dialogue contains embedded stage directions, and direct addresses to the audience contain information about the nature of the audience and the implied venue.

¹⁴ *The Macro Plays: The Castle of Perseverance, Wisdom, Mankind*, ed. by Mark Eccles, Early English Text Society, OS, 262 (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 7, line 156.

bearers', serve as advertising narrators of the play to come.¹⁵ The only overt narrators in any of the Macro Plays, these vexillators not only summarize the story of the drama, but they also recurrently identify the playing space as a town green and the expected audience as 'þe goode comowns of þis towne þat beforn us stond | In þis place' (lines 8–9), for whom they invoke God's blessing. The town is not named; twice the text assumes the name of a particular town will be inserted (lines 134, 145).¹⁶

The purpose of the vexillators is to drum up an audience for the play. They make this clear by urging their listeners, whom they address as 'syrys', 'all goode neyborys', and 'dere frendys' to 'haste 3ou þanne þedyrward' and to 'be þere betyme'. The terms of address bear mentioning. Identified initially as the 'commons' or citizens of good but ordinary standing at the beginning of the play (line 6 above), the audience is now wooed as 'sirs' (a term that can signify stature, but that can also be informally appended as a title of respect to a name or position or, as here, in direct address), and then further familiarized as neighbors and friends: 'Sirs, good neighbors, dear friends, hasten graciously ('hendly in hyth') to the play; be prompt, for by 'vndyrne' (perhaps afternoon or evening) the players will be on their way (lines 135–39). The Banns, then, affirm that a troupe of players will come to town, perform on the green for assembled townspeople, and leave. In addition to flattering those assembled, the vexillators partly appeal to the audience through their own processional flair, calling for trumpets to 'trumpe up' for their departure, and no doubt waving the banners that give them their name. Their narrative does not seem riveting to modern sensibilities. They tell the entire story — this is not a drama that prides itself on surprise — while they themselves take on a clear but also plain preaching style, warning against the vanity of human wishes that will inevitably force mankind to end up with a ne'er-do-well lad 'wyth a torne hod' named 'I wot nevere who' as his heir (lines 104, 109). The town green has become a pulpit, enlivened by the pomp of their arrival and departure and the promise of a play. Though versified in the thirteen-line stanzaic form of the play itself, their speeches are simple and plain, notable for the absence of metaphor or figural exempla.

¹⁵ The term 'vexillator', derived from the Latin word for 'flag', was sometimes used for standard-bearing prologues, as for instance in the Chester cycle.

¹⁶ The 'commons' are for the Banns at least *standing* on the green, though the accompanying stage plan suggests that they might be sitting (as well as moving around) during the actual play, the sitting and moving both directed by the 'stytlers' (or usher-style figures) called for in the stage plan.

In the course of their narrative, the vexillators establish the frame of reference for the drama differently from the appeals that expository characters make in *Mankind* and *Wisdom*. The path to redemption is essentially the same in all three plays; it consists of Humanum Genus's calling at the last moment on Mercy and, through that call, gaining God's grace. All three plays presume a basically Christian (Catholic) audience. The direct address here is not to household guests, as it is in *Wisdom*, or to those gathered in a 'house' that may well be an inn or inn-yard, as in *Mankind*, but to townspeople publicly gathered out of doors. However, the references to authority in the vexillators' speeches and subsequently throughout the play are not to anyone in authority in the town but to a Royal master: first, in the Banns to the King of England: 'oure lege lord þe kynge, þe leder of þis londe' (line 7), then in the play to God, 'Pater sedens in trono' (dramatis personae and line 3560sd). Subtly allying the English King with God does not differentiate this play from the later Morality *Wisdom*, which similarly allies Christ as King with English royalty. However, by portraying the forces of evil (the World, the Devil, and the Flesh) as lesser, feudal kings and invoking the *mappa mundi* as the locus of playing, *The Castle of Perseverance* presents a distinctive narrative and expository appeal through the vexillators of the Banns and the inside/outside characters of the play.

The stage plan that accompanies this play in the Macro Manuscript establishes the notion of the theatrical arena as a replica of the world, prescribing a playing space that presumes what Hindley has called the 'audience's familiarity with the multi-set stage as a representation of the cosmos'.¹⁷ God is enthroned in the east,

¹⁷ Hindley, in this volume. Because of the staging plan, this has been one of the morality plays whose staging has seemed most 'fixed'. Richard Southern, *Medieval Theatre in the Round: A Study of the Staging of 'The Castle of Perseverance' and Related Matters* (London: Faber and Faber, 1957) is the classic text for staging discussions of this play. Southern conjectured that a hill was built up of dirt used to dig the moat, to provide seats for the audience. In 1979 David Parry's five hour Poculi Ludique Societas production at the University of Toronto attempted to enact the stage diagram, replacing the moat called for in the plan and Southern's conjectured 'hill' of dirt with bleachers and a fence. Parry edited the script as his Ph.D. dissertation: '*The Castle of Perseverance*: A Critical Edition' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Toronto, 1984; see *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 44.10 (1984), 3060A). However, Martin Stevens challenged Southern's practical approach to the stage plan of this play ('From *Mappa Mundi* to *Theatrum Mundi*', p. 47n). In the 1990s, Peter Happé, in 'Staging L'Homme pecheur and *The Castle of Perseverance*,' *Comparative Drama*, 30 (1996), 377–94, added his voice to the staging issues. In an article that considers some of the questions of power and comparisons relevant to this analysis, J. P. Debax, 'From the Throne of God to the Throne of Man: The Throne as Prop and Allegory in Tudor Drama,' *European Medieval Drama*, 5 (2001), 17–26, compared the use of an allegorical

Belyal in the north (the area traditionally associated with the devil), Caro (Flesh) in the south, Mundus (King World) in the West, and Covetousness in the North-east, the area, as Martin Stevens describes it, of 'unclean semi-human monsters', encircling a staging area with the Castle of Perseverance itself at the centre (the traditional locus in medieval maps of Jerusalem). By associating 'geographical zones with moral transgression', the *imago mundi* of the stage set 'is unmistakably a link between the world and the theater':

The spectator who was familiar with the *mappa mundi* design would have to assume that the stage was in fact a replica of the world. [...] Most important, however, is the moral nature of this stage journey — its orientation, as the word implies, to the east, but its transgressions associated with the perimeter, where the invasive forces of the World, the Flesh, and the Devil, the three figures of the temptation, with their helpmates, the Seven Deadly Sins, attack and cajole man from the margins.¹⁸

In the expository address to the audience with which he opens the play,¹⁹ King Mundus claims mastery of the 'world' as a set of fiefdoms 'sesyd' (seised or bound) by feudal contract to him through the activities of his Treasurer Covetousness (line 182).²⁰ The twenty-four territories he boastfully claims as his own are widespread — ranging from Assaria (Assyria) and Almagne (Germany) to France and Flaunders, incorporating such outlying and fanciful locations as 'longe Pygmayne' (the land of the Pygmies), through Massadoyne (Macedonia), and finally to Rodys (Rhodes) and ryche Rome (lines 170–82). King Mundus's claim of mastery and ownership of these regions is invalidated from the outset by the bombastic alliteration that reduces the claim to a seemingly random, almost nonsensical list. In contrast, when God appears at the end of the play sitting with imperial majesty in his throne, he makes no such claims. His authority speaks simply for itself.

throne in *Castle to Medwall's Nature*, a play that compares very interestingly to the Macro play *Wisdom*, which is an early masque or 'dysgysynge' in the mould of Medwall's play.

¹⁸ All quotations from Stevens, 'From *Mappa Mundi* to *Theatrum Mundi*', pp. 35–36. See earlier A. C. Cawley, 'The Staging of Medieval Drama', in *The 'Revels' History of Drama in English*, ed. by Lois Potter (London: Methuen, 1983), pp. 22–24, and Catherine Belsey, *The Subject of Tragedy* (London: Methuen, 1985).

¹⁹ Editorially numbered continuously with the Banns by Eccles and so beginning at line 157.

²⁰ For a fuller discussion of the feudal allegory in this play, see Milla Riggio, 'The Allegory of Feudal Acquisition in *The Castle of Perseverance*', in *Allegory, Myth and Symbol*, ed. by Morton W. Bloomfield, Harvard English Studies, 9 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), pp. 187–208.

The stage plan sets up King Mundus's false feudal claims and God's imperial power, establishing a 'Theatrum Mundi' that replicates the cosmos, linking the audience with the actors in that inscribed area, urging urban viewers to negate feudal lordships that might well be associated more with the early than the late fifteenth century in favour of God's grace — and, by implication, the King's power. In keeping with Mundus's sweeping claims of nearly universal feudal kingship, this 3649-line play with its thirty-three characters (few of whom can be doubled) has an epic scope and suggests a formidable travelling troupe, likely to be possible only with aristocratic patronage.²¹ The play thus has something of the heraldic pomp of a visiting Royal progress for the local audience. At the same time, since 'most medieval cities were surrounded by high, crenellated, circular walls and by a moat for defensive purposes', the stage plan itself — with its circular boundaries and its designated moat or 'dyche' — further reflects the urban locus of the drama, setting up the direct appeal of the play and its exposition to a city audience.²²

Apart from the vexillators of the Banns, who are both narrators and expositors, the expositors are all characters in the play: King Mundus's opening address to the audience is followed the two other feudal 'Kings' — Belyal and Caro — defining themselves, the nature and extent of their reign, and their influence. As Humanum Genus has not yet appeared (in the fiction of the play, been born), these evil kings speak directly to the audience. The Devil and the Flesh — presenting themselves essentially as their own exempla — leave no doubt of the malignancy of

²¹ The staging demands of this play are extensive, involving a castle and five scaffolds, with multiple costumes for a large cast. One might conjecture association of the players in a regional area with one of the families whom Alexandra Johnston identified as showing off their wealth 'through the sumptuousness' of their productions. East Anglian families — the provenance of the Macro Manuscript (see discussion of *Mankind* in this chapter) — with such wealth included the Howards, Dukes of Norfolk, or John de la Pole, Duke of Suffock, who had married Edward IV's sister Elizabeth. See Alexandra F. Johnston, 'Wisdom and the Records: Is There a Moral?', in *The Wisdom Symposium*, ed. by Milla Cozart Riggio (New York: AMS Press, 1986), pp. 87–102 (pp. 100–01). In the City of Norfolk a century later, preparations for a royal entertainment included digging a ditch 'for the Nymphes of the water [...] measure taken for threescore foote of grounde every way, the hole to be made deepe and foure square'. See *Records of Early English Drama: Norwich 1540–1642*, ed. by David Galloway (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), p. 315. Assuming *Castle* to be performed by players patronized by a noble household does cast an interesting light on the fact that though the play is designed for performance on a town green, the play offers homage to the King of England, implicitly allied with God, without reference to any of the presiding city officials.

²² Stevens, 'From *Mappa Mundi* to *Theatrum Mundi*', p. 35.

their intent. The aim of the Devil, whose 'wenne' (joy) is obtained by creating 'woo' (woe), is that 'Mankynde be stroyed' (lines 204, 207); the Flesh defines the aim of 'þe Werld, þe Deuyt, and me' as 'to distroy Mankende' (lines 266, 270). Though these tempters will use guile in their seduction of Humanum Genus, as preachers they make their purpose clear to the audience.

Playing — as the cycle plays similarly do — in an urban outdoor setting, Mundus literally 'out-Herods Herod' (*Hamlet*, III. 2. 14).²³ *The Castle of Perseverance*, engaging a large audience in a sizeable outdoor space, begins with Worldly King Mundus, whose retinue occupies the theatrical space during most of the 3645 lines. Though — in the only appearance of the Good and Bad Angel in an English morality play before Marlowe's *Dr Faustus* — there is a Bonus Angelus to fight the Malus Angelus, God himself does not appear until line 3245. The action moves around the *mappa mundi*-style playing space from scaffold to scaffold, with the castle centrally dominating the cosmic circle. This play, like some French *moralités*, matches the seven vices and virtues, all serving expository functions as well as participating in the action of the play. After five of the virtues, acting as expositors, define their own natures to Humanum Genus and the audience (lines 1602–1714),²⁴ all seven lovely ladies triumphantly fling flowers from the castle walls where they are securely elevated against the seven boisterously buffooning sins, attempting to assault the castle with useless lances. The action is elegantly expansive as well as scatological and vulgarly comic. It owes as much to conventions of Romance battles as to moral allegories.²⁵ Death as a character plays a role only in this play among the Macro moralities; hell is powerfully invoked. And Belyal is exhorted in the stage plan to 'loke þat he haue gunnepowdyr brennyng in pypys in hys handys and in hys erys and in hys ars whanne he gothe to batayl'.²⁶

²³ Self-defining exposition is, of course, characteristic not only of the Macro moralities but of the cycle plays, where characters like Herod are known for their ranting bombast. In fact, what is striking about the poses and postures of the three Kings, World, the Devil, and the Flesh, at the beginning of *Castle* is precisely the resemblance of their approaches — and especially that of King Mundus — to that of characters like Herod.

²⁴ A hiatus in the manuscript at line 1601 probably accounts for the missing two expositions, of Paciencia and Castitas. The five who speak are Caritas, Abstinencia, Sollicitudo, Largitas, and Humilitas.

²⁵ See Merle Fiffeld, 'The Assault on the Castle of Perseverance – the Tradition and the Figure', *Ball State University Forum*, 16 (1975), 16–26.

²⁶ See Philip Butterworth, 'Gunnepowdyr, Fyre and Thondyr', *Medieval English Theatre*, 7, (1985), 58–76. Gunpowder effects were not limited to big outdoor spaces, but combined with

Delaying the entrance of God for 90% of the play, reinforcing the self-defining exposition of the virtues with a Romance battle, and enhancing the bombast of the sins and their masters with spectacular effects do not diminish the preaching goals of the play, but such strategies do help the expositors to engage and hold onto an audience assembled for the production on a large outdoor green, to which access has been limited, as access to the city itself would be limited, by a surrounding moat or ditch.

Mankind

What how, ostlere, Hostlere! Lende ws a football.²⁷

Unlike *The Castle of Perseverance*, there are no isolated narrators or expositors in *Mankind*, the second of the Macro moralities to be considered. All the expository preaching and teaching in this 914-line play, probably composed during the 1470s (roughly fifty years after *Castle*, during the last decade before the Tudor reign), is a function of the characters within the drama. The nature of these characters differs markedly from both *The Castle of Perseverance*, in which the vexillators announced to the townsfolk that the players would appear ‘in ryal array’ (royal garments, line 134), and *Wisdom*, in which Christ appears as a King with his bride Anima dressed as a queen. Though it does share with *Castle* a scatological focus in the presence of vulgar sins or seducers, aimed in both plays to capture the attention of the gathered audience, *Mankind* offers no hint of royalty or ‘royal array’ among its characters.²⁸ The figure representing good is the allegorical personifica-

other strategies, they do reinforce the broad spectacle of this play, compared to the smaller playing styles of the two subsequent Macro Plays.

²⁷ *Mankind*, line 732, in *Macro Plays*, ed. by Eccles.

²⁸ Though costume, character status, and rank can be useful as evidence here, one must evaluate such evidence in relationship to the particular instance. Both *The Castle of Perseverance* and *Wisdom* use aristocratic clothing as costumes for some characters, but they deal with the notion of royalty and the regal quite differently, in keeping with their different presumptions of venue and audience. This question will be discussed briefly in reference to *Wisdom* below. In contrast, the plainness of costume and characterization in *Mankind*, together with the presumed social position of audience members to whom characters point or allude, does reinforce the general presupposition that though this play is performed before an audience of mixed social status, its auspice was not likely to originate among the elite households. For a different view, see Tom Pettitt, ‘*Mankind*: An English Fastnachtspiel?’, in *Festive Drama*, ed. by Meg Twycross (Cambridge: Brewer, 1996), pp. 190–202 (p. 190). See also discussion of *Wisdom* in this paper.

tion of Mercy, here represented as an authoritative but plain male clerical figure rather than the more usual feminine virtue; the prime mover of evil is a devil named Tityvillus, elevated beyond his usual minor status to the 'worst of þem all', who 'syngnyfyth the Fend of helle' (lines 304, 886), aided in his seduction of Mankynde by Myscheffe and three clowns known as New Gyse, Nowadays, and Nought — comparable in a minor way to the boisterously scatological sins in *Castle*.

As Tom Pettitt pointed out in 1996, 'Few medieval English plays have experienced as radical a critical re-assessment' as *Mankind*, with a fair amount of scholarly disagreement about the likely venue of the play and the nature of the players that presented it, all based on readings of the text.²⁹ In a tradition that presumes a direct link between the actors and the audience, the text offers the best — and in the case of *Mankind* essentially the only — clues to the nature of the relationship between the play, its presumed players, and its probable audience. Thus, we

²⁹ Pettitt assumes the play to have been a Carnival play, performed either in a noble household or a household or hall owned or leased by a guild. Pettitt's own evidence seems against him; the morality plot of Christian repentance — very different from the more overtly carnivalesque themes of the plays that Pettitt names for comparison ('*Mankind*', pp. 195–98) — seem to discredit the notion of a Carnival play, though performances of many different kinds of plays took place in English households in the Christmas to Lent season that is roughly associated with Shrovetide. And Nerida Newbigin, in this volume, describes 'chaste carnival entertainments' that were offered by Italian confraternities 'as an alternative to the often licentious *mummie* or masks that were long the custom of Florentine youth'. See also Larry Clopper, '*Mankind* and its Audience', *Comparative Drama*, 8 (1974–75), 347–55; repr. in *Drama in the Middle Ages: Critical and Comparative Essays*, ed. by Clifford Davidson and John H. Stroupe, Second Series, 18 (New York: AMS Press, 1991), pp. 240–48. Clopper used the text — focussing on such issues as the collection of money and the use of Latin — to argue for performance in an elite household; similarly, Paula Neuss, 'Active and Idle Language: Dramatic Images in *Mankind*', in *Medieval Drama*, ed. by Neville Denny, Stratford-upon-Avon Studies, 6 (London: Edward Arnold, 1974), pp. 41–67, argues for literate audience members on the basis of Latin in the text; for a later study of the use of Latin in this play, see also Janette Dillon, '*Mankind* and the Politics of "Englysch Latyn"', *Medievalia et Humanistica*, n.s., 20 (1993), 41–64. This study briefly takes up the question of Latin in *Mankind* in the section on *Wisdom*. Suzanne Westfall, *Patrons and Performance: Early Tudor Household Revels* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990) considers the question of auspice and decides that *Mankind* is a hybrid, but likely to have been performed by an itinerant travelling group. Alexandra Johnston, 'The Audience of the English Moral Play', in *Le Théâtre et la cité dans l'Europe médiévale*, ed. by Jean-Claude Aubailly and Edelgard E. DuBruch (Stuttgart: Hans-Dieter Heinz Akademischer Verlag, 1988), pp. 291–97, focuses on the persona of *Mankind* as a farmer as evidence that the play was designed for touring in rural areas. Most of the above interpretations were revisions or critiques of the long-standing assumption that this was a play performed in an inn-yard by a small itinerant professional troupe of players.

are thrown back to our initial questions: What does the text tell us about likely performance and performance venues? What is the text directing its players to do, who are those players likely to have been, and whom does it presume to be its audience?

To begin with the players: Compared to the thirty-three characters in *The Castle of Perseverance*, *Mankind* has seven characters, with the central redemptive figure of Mercy likely doubled with that of the demon Tityvillus. Although minstrels are required to play for dances (line 72), the strong presumption must remain, as Suzanne Westfall concludes, that this is a play performed by a small, probably itinerant troupe of players, who pass a collection plate.³⁰

In terms of the venue, again the text seems clear. The play is designed for an indoor audience: Mankynde goes outside (into the 'yerde', line 561) to relieve himself.³¹ The playing space is referred to as a 'house', with a 'dore' and a 'goode-man' as its 'master' (lines 209, 159, 467–68). Players would scarcely designate the 'master' of a noble household as a 'goodeman'; while this term indicates a probable householder, husband, or innkeeper, it assumes a social status below the rank of gentleman. Moreover, New Gyse calls for an 'ostlere' and asks for a 'football'. Since there is no ostler in the play itself, he must be found in the audience, again inscribed within the world of the play. Where there is an ostler, there is likely an inn. These direct references, together with the notion of a popular sport like football, the passing of the hat, and the boisterous vulgarity (which Westfall thinks not likely for chapel performers in a noble household), suggest that an inn or inn-yard seems indeed the most probable auspice.³²

³⁰ Westfall, *Patrons and Performance*, pp. 54–55.

³¹ Pettitt, 'Mankind', p. 190, raises the issue of why a 'yerde' would be alluded to, if the players were already in an inn-yard. But, of course, the 'inn-yard', if that is where the play is performed, is circumscribed; the space is relatively interior, allowing for going actually outside, through the door, or as David Bevington suggested, into an interior room. David Bevington 'Popular and Courtly Traditions on the Early Tudor Stage', in *Medieval Drama*, ed. by Denny, pp. 97–98 (cited in Pettitt, p. 199n).

³² However, since the question of venue or players matters in this study only as a guide to assessing ways in which expository, direct addresses in the play further the didactic sermonizing aim of the drama, it must be noted that the difference between a private household, though not likely to be an aristocratic one, and the inn is relatively insignificant, nor does it matter whether the play was performed on a raised stage or on the floor. What is important is the notion of a small group of visiting players, who present a moralizing play to an audience of mixed social status, which appears to have some 'sovereigns', some 'brothern', a 'goodeman' for a household master, an 'ostlere' within reach, and actors in need of money.

As for audience, a mixed audience is scripted into the play from the beginning; Mercy opens in a typically hortatory mode addressing the audience, whom he specifies as: 'O 3e souerens þat sytt and 3e brothern þat stonde ryght wppe' (line 29), distinguishing between those with variable social position.³³ At line 333, 'all þe yemandry [yeomen] that ys here' are asked to join in the singing. In a moment in which the audience is, typically, scripted into the drama, New Gyse identifies 'þe goodeman of þis house', whom he calls 'master' as a targeted donor among the 'worschypfull souerence', from whom the clowns 'intende to gather mony' (lines 467–68, 459–60). Though this is not a play for which admission was apparently charged, the audience is expected to contribute:

NEW GYSE: 3e, go þi wey! We xall gaper mony onto,
 Ellys þer xall no man hym se.
 Now gostly to owr purpos, worschypfull souerence,
 We intende to gather mony, yf yt plesse yowr neclygence,
 For a man with a hede þat ys of grett omnipotens. (lines 457–61)

This 'passing of the hat' helps both to explain and to raise questions about the relationship of characters in the play to the audience. First, the apparently impromptu action is scripted. New Gyse offers to collect money for a man 'of grett omnipotens' (the devil Tityvillus), who, according to Nowadays 'louyth no grotys, nor pens or to pens' (line 464), that is, doesn't have time for pennies. Immediately, however, New Gyse corrects this information. 'Not so! 3e þat mow not pay þe ton, pay þe toper' (line 465). In a kind of 'good cop/bad cop' duet, they have first asked for significant contributions by flattering the audience with the respectful title 'worschypfull souerence' that links them to Tityvillus, a 'worschyp-pull man' (lines 459, 463), then modified that request by effectively saying: 'No, no. If you can't pay the bigger amount, pay the other.' In other words, 'we will take what we can get, but if you have standing and position, you will surely want to pay more'.

This exchange — which links the temporal world directly to the devil, as his arena of temptation and also of authority — implicitly acknowledges this audience of mixed means (sovereigns, brethren, yeomen), which Mercy identified at

³³ For definitions of these social categories, see T. W. Craik, *The Tudor Interlude: Stage, Costume, and Acting* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1958), p. 20; Iris G. Calderhead, 'Morality Fragments from Norfolk', *Modern Philology*, 14 (1916), 1–9. Here reference is made to an epilogue from parish plays preserved in 1474 by Robert Reynes of Accle, Norfolk as glossing 'wursheppful souereyns' as 'lordys and ladyes and frankelens in fay'. See also *Macro Plays*, ed. by Eccles, p. 217n.

the beginning. As in the example of Lucifer pointing to ‘prechors’ in the audience of *Wisdom*, the audience has again, indeed more fully, been scripted into the play. New Gyse approaches the master first: ‘At þe goodeman of þis house first we wyll assay’ (line 467). He then thanks him for his contribution, noting that though he might speak ill, ‘3e wyll not sey nay’, and continues to script what people give, in generalized and equalized terms (‘3e pay all alyke; well mut 3e fare’, line 470). Though it is impossible to know how this scene might have played out in reality,³⁴ viewers are not only being directly addressed; their expected roles and even their responses are also written into the script. Without the defining sense of universal space, Stevens’s concept of the ‘Theatrum Mundi’ has been transferred from its outdoor cosmic setting to an interior playing venue in which the audience is literally circumscribed — or, as Stevens would have it, ‘mapped’ — within the scripted world of the drama they are watching.

If this were a religious service, presumably the collection would be taken by those designated by the priest. Here the money is collected by the sinning revellers. They dance and attempt to get Mercy to join them; they tell dirty jokes; they revel in the ‘mery’ life of sin which their names identify as both modern (‘New Gyse’ and ‘Nowadays’) and worthless (‘Nought’). They also bring most of the actual fun into the play, which is, of course, essential to keeping the audience — especially one expected to pay for the privilege — standing or sitting in their places.

This strategy serves a dual purpose. First, it gives the characters who are the most fun the most immediate and direct access to the audience; they are more likely to be able to taunt, tease, and tempt money from the viewers. New Gyse appeals for money with the ironically insulting malapropism ‘yf yt plesse yowr neclygence’ (line 460). Yet, this solicitation does not commercially burden the moral arc of the drama. Though the money appears to be taken up as a genuine collection for the actors, Mercy keeps his hands clean and his role clear. Though the actor (who is probably doubling in the role of Tityvillus) presumably profits in the division of spoils when the play is over, during the play the character is not

³⁴ Pettitt, ‘*Mankind*’, pp. 190–91, presumes that this collection could not have been made throughout the entire audience in the time of the play. At 914 lines, however, the play is very short; scripts often allow for intervals for audience-involved activity. But, again, this does not matter to this argument, which focuses instead on the degree to which the direct interaction — however it might have been played out in any given instance — is itself scripted in the play. Clopper had previously pointed out that an itinerant group could take up a collection in a household as well as an inn. Again, that particular point is relatively insignificant here, though the play does not define itself as one likely to have been produced in an aristocratic household.

tainted by the commercial filth of lucre. Though the collection is taken before Mankynde has yielded to temptation, it is securely screened from the moralizing exposition that begins and ends the play.

The collection scene ends by localizing the drama, even as the collection itself is seemingly forgotten. Tityvillus, for whom the money was ostensibly collected, identifies himself in Latin and asks for a loan from each of the three. Each claims to have an entirely empty purse ('as clen as a byrdys ars', line 489). Tityvillus then sends them out to 'do harme' (line 502) throughout local parishes and neighbourhoods, largely East Anglian, from Cambridgeshire or Norfolk: those named are real and local families.³⁵

In this raucous comic centre of the play, which may seem on the surface the least expository portion of the plot, the cosmic scheme of God's salvation, played out through a drama of sin and redemption, is brought home to the audience through the negative exemplary antics of the comically disruptive forces of evil. Thus, though the exchange between Tityvillus and the three clowns is not directly addressed to the audience, Tityvillus is, in fact, talking to the audience, as Hindley expresses it, 'over the shoulders of the protagonists', engaging viewers who recognize the local references, which are in the play for their benefit. This identifiable link with the 'real' region serves an expository purpose by telling the audience that the world of sin is their world — or the world of their nearby social superiors. God's eternal mercy encompasses the present though it does not acknowledge its existence, but your reality is on a higher plane: the world you know around you is what you should eschew. Though dramatized by Tityvillus and the clowns, this point has earlier been driven home by Mercy's exhortation: 'Beholde not þe erth, but lyfte yowr ey wppe' (line 31).

Once more, the play has essentially obliterated the imaginary boundary separating the fictional world of the drama from the lives of the community and the members of the audience. As surely as if they were speaking directly from the pulpit to a gathered congregation, the players — here apparently making their living

³⁵ *Macro Plays*, ed. by Eccles, p. 222n. Identification of what must be presumed to be local families might suggest a fairly confined East Anglian provenance for performances of this play. This does not rule out itinerant troupes and travelling plays, which might have been limited regionally. What Gail McMurray Gibson has called the 'Theatre of Devotion' was prevalent throughout East Anglia, with references in *Mankind* to other places such as Bury St Edmunds (the locus of the monastery most often associated with the Macro Manuscript), Ely, Walsingham, and of course the villages mentioned here near King's Lynn and Cambridge. *The Theater of Devotion: East Anglian Drama and Society in the Late Middle Ages* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), p. 111.

or at least expecting to earn money from the play — address the audience directly, with familiarity and authority. Even when they acknowledge the audience only indirectly, as in the exchange between Tityvillus and his henchmen, the effect is nevertheless to encompass them within the frame of the drama. All of the characters in the play, the clowns, the devil, Mercy, and Mankynde, take their turns as expositors; all have moral messages — delivered positively or negatively — to the audience, because all have the same ultimate aim, of exhorting through the allegorical and figural representations of the play. In this sense, the expository function, or as it is being defined here, the preaching task of the drama is masked but not disguised by the costumes, the personifications, and the performances of the players.

However, even though each of the characters in *Mankind* serves an expository function, the primary direct expositor of the play is Mercy, who effectively acts both as prologue and epilogue, while retaining his personified role. Within the fictional narrative of the play, Mercy in his ‘inside’ role engages directly in what amounts to a verbal ‘batell’ (term at line 227) for the soul of Mankynde, for whom he serves as Father Confessor and saviour. At the same time, in his role as chief expositor ‘outside’ the drama, Mercy is both the teacher and comforter of the audience. He has begun and will end the play by incorporating the audience directly into God’s larger scheme of salvation, which does not explicitly acknowledge the world of the here and now.

Mercy concludes the play with a final address to a now undifferentiated and implicitly elevated audience. Stressing Mankynde’s wretchedness and need for mercy, he offers a benediction to the assembled ‘Worschepyll soferneys’ (line 903). Here is where we see most clearly the dual nature of Mercy’s role inside and outside the drama. Though Mercy identifies the need for mercy for an audience he addresses in the second person (line 912), he does not assume he has the power to grant it. In fact, he prays not for English mercy but for Latin ‘misericordiam’ so that ‘3ow’ — those audience members to whom he is explicitly directing his comments — may be ‘pleyferys wyth þe angellys abowe’ and ‘hawe to 3our porcyon vitam eternam. Amen!’ (lines 912–14; ‘pleyferys’ are companions in joy; note the macaronic use of Latin). As an allegorical figure, Mercy need not include himself among those requiring redemption; Mankynde in his abject penitence and recovered good sense serves that function. Thus, the expositor at the beginning and the ending of the play is able to spread a mantle of protection over the assembled crowd.

The play ends with Mercy’s reaffirmation, prayer, and a benediction directly addressed to the audience — in a four-line stanza form associated exclusively with

Mercy. Here Mercy's inside/outside character is functionally separated into two, signalled by a double benediction. In line 902, Mercy blesses and dismisses Mankynde with an 'Amen'; as implicit epilogue, he then addresses the audience, and once more ends that address with a second 'Amen', both exempted from the rhyme scheme (lines 902, 914). The play ends with Mercy — having blessed Mankynde and sent him on his way — alone on the stage addressing only the audience, the true object of his 'batell'. He speaks directly to the 'wyrschepyll soferreyns', defines his authority as his 'fauerall patrocynne' (benevolent patronage), and prays for the souls of the audience (lines 902–03). This 'inside/outside' character has ended his mediation in a moment of private solace with the assembled viewers in which the distinction between the theatre and the audience has entirely dissolved. Indeed, the departure of the other actors, which leaves Mercy alone to pray for the audience, reinforces the link between this drama and the sermon style; it is as if the players had entered the world of the audience as dramatic exempla for a sermon now to be concluded by Mercy, directly taking on the role of the preacher as he prays for the welfare of his gathered audience/congregation, while sustaining his dramatic role.

The play world and the 'real' world in *Mankind* are seamlessly and reciprocally continuous with each other in ways that characterize all three of the Macro Plays. *Mankind* stands between *The Castle of Perseverance* and *Wisdom*, both chronologically and structurally. The interaction of the vulgar clowns with the audience recalls the appeal of the sins to the urban audience of the epic outdoor play, even as *Mankind's* direct appeal to an indoor audience suggests links with *Wisdom*. Mercy's allegorical battle with the tempters helps to explicate how this 'popular' play with its small cast of professional actors and raucous style both differs from and is thematically, structurally, and in some ways rhetorically similar to both the other Macro Plays, but particularly to *Wisdom Who Is Christ*.

Wisdom Who Is Christ

A soueren Wysdom, yff yowr benygnyte
Wolde speke of loue, þat were a game.³⁶

In 1984 the Trinity College production of the third Macro Play, *Wisdom Who Is Christ*, took its staging cue for a play often deemed unstageable from the character of Wyll, who in the play declares: 'And best we have wyn | Ande a cosyn of myn,

³⁶ *The Play of Wisdom*, ed. by Riggio, p. 115, lines 39–40.

| Wyth ws for to dyne' (lines 825–27). Reinforced by a good deal of wine, the play was staged for the first time in modern history as a late fifteenth-century dinner masque in a simulated elite household, an attribution now largely accepted:³⁷

The play needs actors who speak dialogue, seven mute boys, dancers, and at least three minstrels. With doubling, the thirty-eight characters may be played by six speakers and seven children, which is [. . .] the average number of performers in great household Chapels. [. . .] All these performers could be found within a household that retained minstrels and a Chapel. [. . .] The play requires 'trumpes', a 'bagpipe', and a 'hornepype'. [. . .] noble households almost always employed trumpeters for heraldic purposes [. . .] often retained bagpipers as waits [. . .] and pipers as minstrels. [. . .] Many other characteristics [. . .] suggest that it was staged by a resident group of trained and subsidized individuals. [. . .] [T]he processions and dances [. . .] necessitate either extensive rehearsal time or a group experienced in such performances.³⁸

In the case of *Wisdom*, the auspice is a major determinant of a play that had long been misunderstood.³⁹ Like *Mankind*, this is an indoor play, which (like both the other Macro Plays) seems to have emerged from the East Anglian fifteenth-century 'theater of devotion' (to use Gail McMurray Gibson's term).⁴⁰ But unlike

³⁷ Directed in Hartford, CT, by Roger Shoemaker; based on the research of Gail McMurray Gibson, set in the simulated dining hall of the Abbot of Bury St Edmunds, a locus that is less likely for original production than an elite household. See Johnston, '*Wisdom* and the Records'. To my knowledge the first modern production of this play was directed by Heinz D. Woehlk at the University of Colorado in 1977. It was directed by John Marshall at Winchester Cathedral in 1981, and by David Klausner of the Poculi Ludique Societas at the Universities of Toronto and Western Michigan in 1991. The only production as a dinner masque was that at Trinity College in 1984.

³⁸ Westfall, *Patrons and Performance*, pp. 52–53. Though the six small boys used for devils (line 912sd) could double — as Westfall suggests — as Anima's 'v prudent virgins' (lines 162, 164sd) and two of the three sets of masque dancers called for in the play (those of Mynde/Maintenance and Understanding/Perjury, lines 692sd, 724sd), the third set of dancers in this play is identified as 'vi women', three of whom are disguised as men, three as women in the dance of Lechery (line 752sd). Since three boys would not likely be described as 'women' disguised as 'men', it seems that, in addition to Westfall's numbers, six women danced in this play, certainly a possibility for an aristocratic household. See *The Play of Wisdom*, ed. by Riggio, p. 275n.

³⁹ This play, which in the Trinity College production in 1984 dazzled a sophisticated dinner audience (including local students, faculty, citizens of Connecticut, and visiting scholars), lost its capacity to engage the audience when the same production was restaged out of doors against the backdrop of the College Chapel on the campus quadrangle on May Day of that same year.

⁴⁰ See Gibson, *Theater of Devotion*, pp. 108–13 for a discussion of *Wisdom*. See also Gail McMurray Gibson, 'The Play of *Wisdom* and the Abbey of St Edmunds', in *Wisdom Symposium*, ed. by Riggio, pp. 39–66.

Mankind, *Wisdom* not only requires a large, probably chapel-trained group of players characteristic of households in the later York and Tudor periods, but it also presumes an elite audience, probably in a household with strong feminine influence of the kind that increasingly existed in the late fifteenth century.⁴¹

Recognizing the venue of the drama and its probable household audience helps to explicate the roles of the expositors of *Wisdom*. The preaching function of this play is its most obvious quality. According to one of its major editors, '*Wisdom* is too intent on teaching moral virtue to have much concern with dramatic virtues. The author combines preaching with pageantry'.⁴² *Wisdom* as Christ, Lucifer, and the three Mightes Mynde, Wyll, and Understanding have expository monologues for 376 out of 1164 lines or roughly one-third of the play.⁴³ In addition, Anima the regal bride of Christ and the Humanum Genus character of the play asks her husband to explain to her (and thus implicitly to the assembled audience) her own nature as the human soul. Of these expository speeches, one is a pure sermon delivered directly to the audience, in which — much like the prologue figure and Le Religieux in the French *Moralité de Charité*⁴⁴ — Christ takes on the

⁴¹ See Barbara J. Harris, *English Aristocratic Women, 1450–1550: Marriage and Family, Property and Careers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002). Powerful women of the late fifteenth century included two Queen mothers: Cicely, the Duchess of York, and mother of Kings Edward IV and Richard III, and Margaret Beaufort, mother of the first Tudor King Henry VII. Both women ran their household establishments with an emphasis on devotional lay piety that reaffirms the value ascribed in a play like *Wisdom* to what was known as '*þe religion of þe bert*' or '*þe abbey of þe holy gost*', that is, to lay piety that mimicked the devotion of a cloistered life; see *The Play of Wisdom*, ed. by Riggio, pp. 25–38; for the argument for the play as an early dinner masque, see *ibid.*, pp. 48–66. Those arguments will not be duplicated in this essay.

⁴² *Macro Plays*, ed. by Eccles, p. xxxvi.

⁴³ *Wisdom*/Christ at lines 1–16 defines his '*propyrte*'; he sums up the significance of the Mightes (lines 277–308); later (during an elaborate costume change for Anima and her Mightes), Christ preaches the '*ix poyntys*' of virtue (lines 998–1064). The play ends with a ten-line benediction and prayer for the audience (lines 1155–64), which in the Riggio edition has been restored to Christ, rather than spoken by Anima. The Mightes also explicate their own significance after *Wisdom* asks them to '*declare þan thys | Yowr syngnyfycacyon & yowr propyrte*': Mynde, lines 183–212; Wyll, lines 213–44; Understanding, lines 245–76. After Lucifer's entrance, they return to give much shorter declarative statements of allegiance to Christ, though in the verse form of Lucifer (lines 381–97); in their new guises as Maintenance, Perjury, and Lechery, they introduce their dancers and minstrels (lines 695–709, 717–35, and 745–52). Finally Lucifer bounds on stage to declare his nature and intentions (lines 325–80); again alone with the audience after his seduction of the Mightes, he proclaims his triumph (lines 519–50).

⁴⁴ See Hindley in this volume.

role of preacher, as alone on the stage he covers the costume change of Anima and the Mightys by instructing the audience in the 'ix poyntys of virtue' (lines 997–1064, but one of many direct quotations of religious texts incorporated into this play).⁴⁵ What Hindley has called the 'significance of text at the very centre of a play's didactic ethos' in the French *moralité* was also a central feature of English morality plays, and particularly of *Wisdom*. Indeed, one way to describe the roles of the expositors in *Wisdom* that simultaneously link this play to and distinguish it from the other two Macro Plays is by examining what Eccles calls its 'pageantry' in relationship to its dramatization of identifiable textual sources.

In terms of pageantry, the outdoor spectacle of *The Castle of Perseverance* to some extent depends on the bombastic appeal of the three feudal 'kings' the World, the Devil, and the Flesh, and the central tournament-style, floral battle between the seven Virtues and Vices. While the play insists on reverence both for God the Imperial Father and the distant British King (the 'lord of our land'), it discredits the minor feudal 'kings' before an urban audience. In contrast, the pageantry of *Wisdom* is invested in liturgical processions, allegorical masque dances, and the confrontation or battle between Christ as Wisdom, who begins the play dressed in the robes of the English King, and a powerful Lucifer (a character who in his intelligence, wit, and mastery of the arts of seduction is a forerunner of Shakespeare's Iago). Though the play contains a boisterous comic section, in which Mynde, Wyll, and Understanding, having been seduced to the dark side of human nature by Lucifer (who has no underlings in this play), do perform raucously — dressing as dandies, drinking and revelling, boasting of their worldly gains, and most relevantly setting out an expensive dinner — the play is less scatological than its Macro fellows.

Indeed, through the conservative elegance of their costumes and the grace of their presence as well as the beauty of Wisdom and Anima's love story drawn from the Song of Solomon, the forces of good must in this play win the dramatic as well as the moral battle. If the play is to succeed, the dramatic rhythm defined by the stately, liturgical, processional movement of Christ, Anima, her five 'prudent virgins' (representing the five human senses), and her Mightys (or faculties) at the beginning of the drama must engage an audience in a noble (and no doubt conservative) household. This is the only play in which the central 'Everyhuman' figure is an aristocrat — in this case a woman, the bride of Christ, dressed almost

⁴⁵ The *IX Poynts* text is taken from translations of the *Novem Virtutes*, formerly ascribed to Richard Rolle. For other texts quoted at length, see *The Play of Wisdom*, ed. by Riggio, pp. 27–47, 416–17, and 181–310nn passim.

exactly as the Queen of England is likely to have been clothed on the Eve of her Coronation.⁴⁶ Wisdom dominates the play to an extent far greater than that of the 'Pater sedens in trono' of *The Castle of Perseverance*, who does not speak for the first 3245 lines of the play.

Indeed, it was a failure to understand the beauty and elegance of the framing episodes dominated by Christ and his regal bride that led to the dismissal of this play as 'undramatic'. So long as one sees the sermonizing of morality drama as essentially interrupting rather than establishing the rhythm of the play, it is impossible to grasp the central dynamic of the drama itself. No doubt, the vulgar antics of the world of sin enliven and relieve the seriousness of embedded sermons, even as the scatological characters reveal to the audience their own perfidy. But the dramatic arc of morality plays — and of *Wisdom* in particular — is keyed to the link established by the inside/outside expositors, such as Wisdom, between the pageantry of the play and its textual sermonizing.

The question of the text is particularly significant for *Wisdom*, as it highlights one of the ways in which this moral play not only engaged members of a household in its preaching as well as its entertainment, but simultaneously through its use of textual sources links the drama with developing literacy in the fifteenth century, particularly encouraged by aristocratic women. Women like Cicely of York or Margaret Beaufort (and many others of lesser stature) were commissioning miscellanies, first in manuscript form and ultimately by the time of Margaret as printed books, which included the works of Henry Suso, Richard Rolle, and Walter Hilton, the specific source authors of *Wisdom*.⁴⁷ In such houses — where the notion of lay piety often approached the level of cloistered contemplation — daily oral readings for the family might well see the replacement of romances by didactic works that 'wil make no veyn spekyng | Of dedes of armes ne of amourys | As don mysntreles and oþer gestoures'.⁴⁸ A play like *Wisdom* that dramatizes the relationship of God to the human soul as a tender love story ('yff yowr benygnyte | Wolde speke of loue, þat were a game') between a royal husband and wife must in such a household have provided 'a game' indeed.

⁴⁶ See *The Play of Wisdom*, ed. by Riggio, pp. 186–87n for an explication of Anima's regal costume.

⁴⁷ See *The Play of Wisdom*, ed. by Riggio, pp. 416–17 for a bibliography of manuscripts, many of which were so commissioned; such volumes deserve study in their own right.

⁴⁸ An anonymous author, possibly William Nasington, Cambridge University Library MS Ll.1.18; see *The Play of Wisdom*, ed. by Riggio, p. 34.

By beginning the play with Wisdom's direct address to the audience, defining his own nature and that of Anima (who as a woman is not given the role of self-definition, though her masculine Might's do have such expository speeches), *Wisdom* in a sense out-heralds *The Castle of Perseverance*, though with a more intimate style. When one compares the expositors of *Wisdom* to those of the other indoor play *Mankind*, a different dynamic emerges. Though *Mankind* lacks the pageantry of the two other Macro Plays, it does share with *Wisdom* a direct appeal to a fairly sophisticated audience gathered indoors. In both plays, the actors directly talk to and specify members of the audience ('prechors' or an 'ostlere'), in a way that exists in *Castle* largely in the more overt narration of the vexillators in the Banns.

However, *Wisdom* and *Mankind* approach their audiences differently. One major difference has already been alluded to in the sustained seriousness of the dialogical exposition in the first 324 lines of *Wisdom*.⁴⁹ As noted earlier, this opening scene is heavily indebted to the beautiful love language of the Song of Solomon (part of the Henry Suso dialogue, as well), in which Christ binds his bride to himself. In contrast, though Mercy begins *Mankind* by directly addressing the audience, he is not allowed to sustain his earnest address unchallenged. Within the first forty-five lines Myscheffe has bounded onto the scene to begin a satirical attack on what he calls Mercy's 'mysse-masche, dryff-draff' (line 49).

Myscheffe's satirical attack on Mercy, picked up by the clowns, distinguishes how the expositors of *Mankind* appeal to their audience from those in *Wisdom*. Both of these plays intermingle Latin phrases and quotations with the English text, sometimes with and sometimes without direct translation or paraphrase into English. Thus, both plays presume an audience that can either understand Latin or at least is trained by their experiences at worship to accept the language as a natural part of the preacherly discourse.⁵⁰ But, though both plays are interlaced with Latin (in *Mankind* even Tityvillus enters speaking Latin, calling himself 'Ego sum dominancum dominus', line 474), they treat it very differently. In *Wisdom*

⁴⁹ The first 168 lines dramatize the Henry Suso dialogue *Orologium Sapientiae* between Christ and the human soul (reversing the genders of Christ, who speaks in a feminine voice when talking to the soul in the Suso dialogue, and Anima, who in the Suso dialogue is masculine) and portions of Walter Hilton's *Scala Perfectionis*, both texts that are likely to have been found in the miscellanies commissioned by women discussed earlier. Lines 179 through 324 present the Might's defining their own natures in lengthy speeches derived from biblical and devotional sources, ending with Anima's tribute of fealty to Christ.

⁵⁰ See Clopper, 'Mankind and its Audience', Neuss, 'Active and Idle Language', and Dillon, 'Mankind and the Politics of "Englysch Latyn"'.

Latin phrases are often paraphrased or essentially explicated, but they are never mocked. In contrast, the first satire in *Mankind* turns on Myscheffe's mockery both of what New Gyse will later call 'Englysch Laten' (line 124) and of textual explication: "Corn seruit bredibus, chaffe horsibus, straw fyrybusque." | Thys ys as moche to say, to yowr leude wndyrstondyng, | As þe corn xall serue to brede at þe nexte bakyng' (lines 57–59). Later Nowadays will ask, again satirically, 'To haue þis Englysch mad in Laten: | "I haue etun a dyschfull of curdys, | Ande I haue schetun yowr mowth full of turdys"' (lines 130–32).

In *Wisdom's* reliance on vernacular textual as well as biblical sources, as in *Mankind's* vulgar mockery of 'Englysch Laten', these latter Macro Plays find their niche in the later English fifteenth-century, when Roman Catholic lay piety, particularly among aristocratic women, was fuelling the move to vernacular texts that the Catholic Church was (somewhat ironically) conservatively attacking, particularly among the Lollards.⁵¹ *Wisdom's* more aristocratic tenor, as well as the fact that the play dramatizes the inner journey of the soul, places it in an interesting position in relationship to *Mankind's* more overtly mocking dismissal of linguistic exegesis.

Though both plays presume audiences to whom Latin phrases are familiar, *Wisdom* presents Latin (often translated) as instrumental to the language of Christian devotion. In contrast, *Mankind* mocks both the use of Latin in English texts and the figural interpretation of Latin exempla. Such treatment of the language is consistent with the two plays. *Wisdom*, designed for performance in a noble household, embeds much of its allegory in binary oppositions between forms of dress, music, and ritual movement, with conservative long clothing, plainsong chanting, and liturgical processions signifying the forces of good, and new courtly styles of shorter clothing, three-part music, and profane dancing signifying evil. *Wisdom* explicates the 'sygnyfycacyon', 'propyrte', and 'figure' of the allegorical personifications (e.g. see lines 182, 214, and note 43 above). Like *Wisdom*, *Mankind* invests sin allegorically in the modernity of 'Nowadays' and 'New Gyse' (literally, the new 'guise' or clothes). But in its more raucous comedy, performed by a smaller visiting troupe of actors rather than trained members of a household, the play also mocks the earnest style that *Wisdom* appropriates as its own.

Finally, the expository reach of *Wisdom*, like that of *Mankind*, is embedded subtly in the texture of the verse itself. Like the Dutch Rhetoricians drama

⁵¹ See Dillon, 'Mankind and the Politics of "Englysch Laten"', esp. pp. 41–47. For work on the Lollards, see Margaret Aston, *Lollards and Reformers: Images and Literacy Late Medieval Religion* (London: Hambledon Press, 1984).

described by Elsa Streitman in this volume, both plays not only use ‘decors, costumes, gestures, poses, and pictures’ to ‘disseminate their messages’, they also use ‘different verse forms’ to further the expository aims of the drama. *Mankind* loosely and somewhat inconsistently establishes a particular verse form for Mercy and for Tityvillus and his cohorts. *Wisdom*, however, establishes specific stanza and verse forms for Wisdom and Lucifer — more nearly balanced opposing figures — that resemble those of Mercy and Tityvillus, but which entirely govern the drama.⁵² In *Wisdom*, the verse scheme inescapably signals to the audience as clearly as the expository speeches which contender (Christ or Lucifer) is, for the moment at least, triumphant. Thus, when the three Mightes re-enter the scene after Lucifer’s soliloquy, at line 381, the audience knows what is to come, even though the Mightes are still swearing allegiance to Wisdom, because they have given up Wisdom’s Latinate diction and weighty line in favour of Lucifer’s jingle-rhyming verse form (see lines 381–92). When Wisdom re-enters the play at line 873, he brings with him the rhyme scheme and stanza structure that will control the drama to the end, telegraphing his ultimate victory before the Mightes and Anima have declared their penitence.

At the end of *Wisdom*, as at the end of *Mankind*, Wisdom as Christ pronounces a benediction on the audience that, like Mercy’s concluding prayer in *Mankind*, ends appropriately with an *Amen* that is not part of the verse scheme of the play, but that does clearly point in its prayerful way to the ultimate aim of the drama to instruct, to preach, and to bless as well as entertain its audience.⁵³

⁵² Wisdom’s form, an implicit eight-line stanza of relatively long lines with heavy liturgical rhymes and highly abstract, Latinate language, rhyming *ababbcbc* (similar to the initial verse scheme of Mercy in *Mankind*), is used by everyone in the play until Lucifer introduces his breezier verse form at his entrance at line 325. This form is an implicit eight-line stanza, with generally though not always shorter lines, varying in length from four to eight or occasionally nine syllables, with a jauntier rhyming scheme that includes tail rhymes, much like the pattern of the devil’s verse in *Mankind*: rhyming *aaabcccb*, with occasional repetitions of the initial rhyme as *aaabaaab*.

⁵³ In the Macro Manuscript, the only existing manuscript of the last part of this play, a manuscript error appears to give this benedictory speech to the central character of Anima. However, textual evidence as well as dramatic logic suggests the restoration of the last ten lines of the play to the character of Wisdom, who surely must speak the final benediction. For a conservative noble household such as those that might have produced this play, there was — at least in theory — no contradiction between the power of women within the domestic establishment and their general compliance within the established hierarchy. Indeed, portraying the ‘Everyhuman’ soul as an aristocratic woman, the emblem of all humanity, emphasizes that sense of respectful obedience to the will of God. See *The Play of Wisdom*, ed. by Riggio, pp. 178 and 307–09n.

Conclusion

Though they do not specify prompters, the three Macro Plays, *The Castle of Perseverance*, *Mankind*, and *Wisdom Who Is Christ*, introduce a pair of narrators (as vexillators in the Banns for *The Castle of Perseverance*) and a range of expositors who have roles inside the drama and yet who speak outside the fictional frame directly to the audience. Indeed, virtually every character in these three plays participates in the expository outreach of the drama to its audience, as both actors and audience alike are implicated in the ‘Theatrum Mundi’ that encircles them not only in the theatre or local playing space of the drama but also within the accepted cosmology of the fifteenth century.

As is inevitably the case with a hegemonic religion, ‘obedience’ to God (‘obsequyouse seruyce’, *Mankind*, line 5) is equivalent to good citizenship. The Macro Plays are both Catholic and conservative, in their social as well as religious outlook. In varying ways, they share the mindset and perspectives of other forms of English Catholic drama, particularly the mystery plays. However, by allegorically dramatizing the journey of the soul, they further reflect the tendency of the period to link transcendent theology with an inward-looking conscience. In this sense, despite their essential conservatism, they belong to the post-Wycliffite century that was coming to terms with — even as it attempted to negate — a greater reliance not only on individual conscience but also on the vernacular texts that underlie the Macro Plays, particularly *Wisdom*.

These English plays share many of the strategies for incorporating preaching into the dramatic frame with other traditions considered in this volume, particularly the French *moralités* examined by Alan Hindley, the Italian confraternity plays analysed by Nerida Newbigin, and the Dutch Rhetoricians plays discussed by Elsa Streitman. Each of these, of course, has its own distinctions. This analysis has been limited to three specific English moral plays of the fifteenth century rather than extended throughout the morality tradition of the sixteenth century and, thus, into the development of both English humanism and Protestantism. Though this skews the comparison slightly, it is clear that each of the other three traditions more self-consciously articulates its own assumptions. Each of the others is, likewise, more overtly indebted to classical mythological narratives (with plays on subjects such as Pyramus and Thisbe, which influenced later English drama; see Pettitt in this volume) and at times rhetorical figures than the Macro Plays.

Nevertheless, the striking similarities not only of purpose but also of rhetorical and dramatic strategies remind us that the development of late medieval, early modern European drama was a part of the unfolding narrative of proto-national

sensibilities brought together by a complex set of assumptions that tied society to religion and explicated political realities in theological terms. The allegorical drama of this period drew its lifeblood from the figural representation and personification of a reality that was otherwise unseen because it was both interior and transcendent. The expositors and narrators of this drama are not undramatic intruders, interrupting the flow of the dramatic narrative; they establish and sustain the dramatic rhythm of the plays themselves.

PROMPTING THE ACTION: THE PROLOGUE, THE MESSENGER, AND THE FOOL

Mario Longtin

The prologue of a mystery is an introductory speech, delivered by the author at the beginning of the representation, a member of the company or a priest, not a member of the company, for the purpose of fixing the attention of the audience, of giving them an understanding of the plot of the piece, and of serving as a vehicle for the apologies and explanations of the author. Each prologue contains one or more of the following elements: sermon, analysis of the preceding or following 'journée', description of stage setting, introduction of actors, apology for subject matter or manner of presentation, reasons for producing, mention of sources.¹

Above is David Hobart Carnahan's definition of the prologue in his book entitled *The Prologue in the Old French and Provençal Mystery*. The American scholar patiently reviewed all of the prologues known to him

I would like to thank my friend and colleague, Professor Jane Tolmie, who read an earlier version of this article and patiently revised, amended, and, all in all, tremendously improved my English prose which always seemed to be crippled by French.

¹ David Carnahan, *The Prologue in the Old French and Provençal Mystery* (New Haven: Tuttle, Morehouse & Taylor, 1905), p. 7; on the topic of prologues in Mystery plays, there are relatively few published articles. Two are definitely worth noting: Darwin Smith, 'La question du *Prologue* de la *Passion* ou le rôle des formes métriques dans la *Créacion du Monde* d'Arnoul Gréban', in *L'Économie du dialogue dans l'ancien théâtre européen*, ed. by J.-P. Bordier (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1999), pp. 141–65; Alan E. Knight, 'Uses of Rhetoric in Medieval French Drama', in *Essays in Early French Literature Presented to Barbara M. Craig*, ed. by Norris J. Lacy and Jerry C. Nash (York, SC: French Literature Publications, 1982), pp. 73–79. The harvest is more abundant in the field of French medieval narrative texts. I would like to bring the attention of the reader to two books of articles: *Seuils de l'oeuvre dans le texte médiéval*, ed. by Emmanuèle Baumgartner and Laurence Harf-Lancner (Paris: Presses de la Sorbonne Nouvelle, 2002); *Prologues et épilogues dans la littérature du Moyen Âge*, ed. by Aimé Petit, in *Bien dire et bien apprendre*, 19 (2001).

at the time in order to establish a typology of dramatic *préambules*. However, despite his efforts, his broad definition fails to address the prologue in relation to his contribution to performance. Indeed, the reader of Carnahan's book learns about different components of the prologue in a great number of texts, but is never informed about his dramatic functions other than the obvious ones stated within the versed speech of the prologue. What remains to be addressed are the role of the prologue in building the play, in terms of space or temporality, the proxemics, or the movement of actors in performance, and perhaps more importantly, the effects that the prologue has on the audience. Rather than try to attempt to embrace the theatricality of all the French Mystery prologues, I would like to focus on two very interesting examples. The *Mystère de sainte Barbe en deux journées* and the *Mystères de la procession de Lille* contain prologues delivered by a character also referred to as 'Prologue'.² Firstly, it is necessary to concentrate on the dramatic functions of the *préambule*. The main goal of my contribution is to establish a link between the character known as the 'Prologue' and two other characters, the 'Messenger' and the 'Fool', who are also found in French Mystery plays. These characters share organizing functions similar to those given to the Prologue. Both of these characters, as I will try to demonstrate, are structuring agents and prompters of the action. In order to understand more fully the connection being made between all three characters, it is necessary to return briefly to Carnahan's monograph. The author, in his preface, explains the structure of his book as follows: 'Only prologues of the regular type have been considered in the body of this work. Irregular and doubtful forms have been treated in a separate chapter.'³ The two terms 'irregular' and 'doubtful' are equally problematic. What makes a prologue 'irregular' and 'doubtful' if not the prescriptive tradition of what is a perfectly constituted prologue containing all of what the critic has found scattered in several prologues and supported by classical rhetoric? But is it necessarily wise to impose such standards and regularity on theatre, especially medieval theatre where every performance is a tribute to the adaptability of everybody taking part in the performance, from the rewriting of the text to its adaptation to local performance conditions? To address the irregular forms is to celebrate the particularity of the medium that is theatre, allowing insights into the very essence of drama and stories presented by created *personae*. Reviewing some of the 'irregular' and 'doubtful' prologues mentioned by Carnahan, it is clear that the Fool is often

² From now on, I shall use the capital to indicate the character to differentiate it from the text.

³ Carnahan, *The Prologue*, p. 6.

found amongst the few characters delivering the *préambule*. In the case of the Fool, what seems to have disqualified the character in the eyes of Carnahan from appearing in the regular forms is the farcical nature of his speech, at odds with the normally moral content of the prologue in the majority of examples analysed by the author.⁴ The Fool is not the only character to wear two hats; the Messenger or Nuncius can also be found delivering prologues. The Messenger is catalogued, by Carnahan, in the 'regular' form in the extant prologues as spoken by the Messenger who conforms to his criteria.

The decision to allocate the *préambule* to a character called 'Messenger' or 'Fool' is far from an innocent one as it modifies the reception of the play and of that character within the play. After all, it is the first exchange between actors and audience, and that first speech establishes the sacred link with the audience. It is the ordained voice that rises like a curtain on a modern stage, and any person playing that rôle is bound to be credited with more importance on stage than the others, if only because of his position of authority. The Messenger and the Fool used as the Prologue raise similar questions that are concerned with performance and staging. Indeed, what qualifies the Fool or the Messenger in the mind of a *fatiste* as a suitable prologuist alongside characters called 'Prologue', 'Prescheur', or 'Meneur de Jeu'? Jelle Koopmans, in *Le Théâtre des exclus au Moyen Âge: hérétiques, sorcières et marginaux*, gives the following answer:

Tout comme le fol, le messenger fait figure de meneur de jeu dans la pièce et sert d'intermédiaire entre la fiction et le public. Au théâtre, la fonction des messagers est également d'introduire parfois les diableries [...]. En cela, les fols et les messagers fonctionnent comme meneur de jeu, comme 'cadre' de la fiction dramatique et comme pont entre le public et la narration.⁵

[In the play, the Messenger, like the Fool, acts as a master of revels and serves as a liaising agent between the fiction and the audience. On stage, the messengers' function is often to introduce the *diableries* [...]. In that, the Fools and the Messengers act as masters of revels, framing the dramatic fiction and acting as a bridge between the public and the narration.]

As Koopmans observes, the Messenger and the Fool are capable of becoming distanced from the fiction and have organizing functions. In studying both these

⁴ 'The general object of the prologues is clearly moral, and very little that is amusing is found in them. Some of the irregular types have the form of farcical introductions by the "Fol", the "Tirans", the Shepherds, etc., but these may not be considered as prologues proper.' Carnahan, *The Prologue*, p. 62.

⁵ Jelle Koopmans, *Le théâtre des exclus au Moyen Âge: hérétiques, sorcières et marginaux* (Paris: Imago, 1997), p. 108.

characters together with the character called 'Prologue', I hope to demonstrate that all three characters expose the dramatic fiction as a construct and that they are allowed to play with the fiction as they rearrange it. In so doing, they map the space of the performance by their words, glossing future actions and commenting on the current action.

Discussion of the prologues in French Mystery plays always raises questions of textual transmission and manuscript culture. These issues need to be tackled in order to be representative of the production in general. It is the only way to understand the nature of the prologue as it affects the purpose and results of transmission.⁶ If understanding of the transmission of the text of a Mystery play is problematic then understanding of the transmission of the prologue is doubly critical due to its unstable status, in the eyes of the scribe or the publisher, as para-text or pre-text.

I would like to begin by suggesting that the prologue is more than a simple *préambule*. The presence of a prologue has dramatic implications and they are not limited to the content of the prologue. My argument attempts to move beyond a limited conception of the *avant-texte* or *avant-spectacle* as mere prefatory material. I will draw here on a prologue found in the *Mystère de sainte Barbe en deux journées*.⁷ The 132 lines of prologue found at the beginning of the first day of the *Mystery of Saint Barbara in Two Days* are of great interest in that they offer particular attention to the practical aspects of performance. In 'Uses of Rhetoric in Medieval French Drama', Alan E. Knight observes some recurrent traits borrowed from the art of sermon-writing that can be found in the prologues of French medieval plays. The prologue of this Mystery play features thirty-two lines of text organized in sermon-like format, followed by eighty-four lines of description of characters and the physical stage. That leaves sixteen lines for what Knight calls the 'disclaimer in regard to possible errors in the dramatic text'⁸ and an appeal to the

⁶ See on that particular issue Darwin Smith, 'Les manuscrits "de théâtre": introduction codicologique à des manuscrits qui n'existent pas', *La Gazette du livre médiéval*, 33 (1998), 1–10; G. A. Runnalls, 'Towards a Typology of Medieval French Mystery Play Manuscripts', in *The Editor and the Text*, ed. by P. E. Bennett and G. A. Runnalls (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1990), pp. 96–113.

⁷ I am preparing a critical edition of *Le Mystère de sainte Barbe en deux journées* (BnF Rés. Yf 1652) for publication. My transcription of this early print is accessible on the internet at the following address: <<http://www.uhb.fr/alc/medieval/barbe/barbe1.html>>.

⁸ Knight, 'Uses of Rhetoric', p. 74.

audience for silence and good behaviour. Within the eighty-four descriptive lines, the Prologue devotes only twelve lines to pure summary before pausing to say:

Il n'est ja bon, com il me semble,
De vous racompter de sa vie;
Les joueurs qui cy sont ensemble,
Chascun en dira sa partie. (lines 41–44)

[It is not yet time, it seems to me, to tell you the story of her life as the players assembled here will each say their part of it.]⁹

It is clearly the purpose of the Prologue in this text not to explain the entire story of Barbara but to give the audience a selective guided tour and an introduction to the characters and the spaces where they evolve. The choice of verbs in this section highlights the importance of the visual. The expression *voyez ci* (here you can see), which punctuates the passage, underlines the importance of the identification of a character and by the same token his or her attachment to a space or location. The anaphoric succession of *voyez ci* works as a spatial list of *dramatis personae* together with a description of the scenery. With each introduction of a new character the audience comes to a fuller understanding of theatrical production under the guidance of the Prologue. The spectators, after this exercise, were able to recognize the characters and their proper positions (the French *reconnaître* is here more suited to express that concept as *connaître*: 'to know' is already inscribed in *reconnaître* as 'to know again, to recognize') because they were introduced to the characters and spaces. The character speaking for the first time is therefore not a stranger. Not only is the character made recognizable but the story has already been told. Barbara was known to the Christian audience, and her prior story emerged in the memory of each spectator, in a form of knowledge that preceded the stage version of the story. The characters of this story have stories that have been told and will be told again and again by 'personnages' (characters) with the help of actors. The name of Barbara bears a story and the utterance of that name invokes that story. The Prologue relies on this dynamic. The characters introduced by the Prologue, in the prologue, are freed from the story in an *avant-la-pièce*. They are players before a game, waiting on stage, characters in search of a play.¹⁰

⁹ All translations found in this text are mine.

¹⁰ This discussion owes a lot to the work of Richard Trachsler, *Disjointures-Conjointures: étude sur l'interférence des matières narratives dans la littérature française du Moyen Âge*, Romanica Helvetica, 120 (Tübingen: Francke Verlag, 2000), and his concept of *pro-récit*. See for example

The phrase *voyez ci* is motivated by the verb *monstrer* (to show, to present) found earlier in the passage:

Monstrer vous vueil tous noz estages,
L'ordonnance de notre jeu,
Selon l'estat des personnages,
Lesquelz ont prins chascun son lieu. (lines 45–48)

[I want to show you all of the stations¹¹ of our stage and the organization of our play according to the hierarchy of the characters. These characters have already taken their designated place.]

The verb *monstrer* is key to the purpose of the Prologue, signalling guidance through the meandering and complex construction that is in front of the spectators' eyes. It is important to remember that the stage itself was built specifically for each performance and that it was an object of great pride for the organizers of the event; it is actually one of the most expensive costs of the production.¹² So the audience is shown around this construction that will be used and briefly introduced to characters who have yet to make the move from snapshots to moving pictures. The verb *monstrer* also indicates meaning concerning 'deliberate exposure or publication: not hiding, not leaving any mystery'. This explains the words spoken by the Prologue at the end of his speech: 'Devant ay bien tout publié' (Here I have divulged everything, line 116). He has done his duty as guide.

The Prologue has given life to each and every one of the characters — all but one. Indeed the Prologue plays up the supposedly improvisational qualities of his introduction, saying:

p. 24: 'Un nom propre d'une certaine notoriété peut parfaitement bien remplir la fonction de "pro-récit", dans la mesure où, pour être correctement identifié, il nécessite, précisément, un savoir extra-textuel. Tel le pronom, le nom propre reprend et convoque sous une forme condensée des données supposées connues dont existe ailleurs la version en expansion.'

¹¹ For more information on the meaning of the word 'estage', see Graham Runnalls, 'Mansion and Lieu: Two Technical Terms in Medieval French Staging?', *French Studies*, 35 (1981), 385–93.

¹² On the material aspects of the organization of a Mystery play, see *Le Compte du Mystère de la Passion de Châteaudun, 1510*, ed. by M. Couturier and Graham A. Runnalls (Chartres: Société Archéologique d'Eure-et-Loir, 1991); Graham Runnalls, 'Le compte de Jehan Brebier pour la représentation de la Passion de Châteaudun de 1510', in *Et c'est la fin pour quoy sommes ensemble. Hommage à Jean Dufournet: littérature, histoire et langue du Moyen Âge*, ed. by Jean-Claude Aubailly, Emmanuèle Baumgartner, Francis Dubost, Lilianne Dulac, Marcel Faure, and René Martin (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1993), pp. 1245–53; Runnalls, 'Deux hommes de théâtre du début du XVI^e siècle', *Revue d'histoire du théâtre*, 48 (1996), 391–406.

Tout nostre fait je vous recite,
 Devant ai bien tout publié,
 Il n'y a plus que cest hermite
 Que j'avoys icy oublié. (lines 115–18)

[Our entire project I narrate to you. Here I have divulged everything, the only one left is this hermit, here, whom I had forgotten.]

How could he forget within his carefully constructed octosyllabic world? He is the one in charge and this is not his only subterfuge in performance. For example, the Jail where Barbara will be locked away is described in a way that is surprising:

Voyez cy la chartre a l'Empereur,
 Le Chartrenier qui en est garde.
 On n'y voit clareté ne lueur
 Au parfond, quand on y regarde. (lines 85–88)

[Here is the jail of the Emperor and the Jailor who is in charge of it. One cannot see anything but darkness at the back when one looks inside.]

Here, the Prologue suggests an atmosphere with specific attention to the provision of light. The fact is that it is virtually impossible to create the impression of darkness without access to light. The spectators are outdoors and they need to see what is happening in the prison. They may imagine darkness but in reality there is light. The words of the Prologue plus remarks made later by the Jailor and his victim Barbara unite to create the *impression* of darkness in the room.

The words of the Prologue can also explain material decisions about particular performances. In the *Mystères de la procession de Lille*,¹³ meant to be staged on pageant wagons (unusually for French Mystery plays), the Prologue intervenes several times to comment on aspects of performance. Here, his content is from the Bible and he needs to contextualize the details before developing the performance with his audience. For example, a biblical character is said to have spent a certain time at a certain place, but the Prologue accelerates the time frame. He carefully tells the spectators about it:

PROLOGUE: Dedan l'istoire est contenu
 que tant que la messon dura,
 Ruth pour pourffiter demoura
 avecq les filles de Boos.
 Et pour tant ycy en brief mos
 par prologue denoté l'ay,

¹³ *Les Mystères de la procession de Lille*, ed. by Alan E. Knight, 2 vols (Paris: Droz, 2001–03), I: *Le Pentateuque*, II: *De Josué à David*.

pour eviter sy grant delay.
 Chascun veulle en lui savourer
 le temps qu'elle y peust demourer.¹⁴

[PROLOGUE: In the Story [Old Testament] it is said that as long as the harvest would last, Ruth, for her benefit, would stay with the daughters of Boos. This is why I mention it here briefly, in a prologue, to prevent such long delay. I leave each one of you to appreciate the time that she could have stayed there.]

Here the prologue is inserted within the diegesis and helps it along. More than a *pro logos*, the character called the Prologue is providing an ongoing gloss to the dramatic text. In so doing he alleviates the problems arising from adapting the 'Story' to the stage. All of the Prologue's interventions in the *Mystères de la procession de Lille* highlight the challenges of telling a story by using *personnages*. The Prologue found here indicates where the organizers of the performance considered that they could not reproduce the reality described in its fullest and had to justify and explain their choices. Of itself, it shows that they were vividly aware of the limits of representation. As Tolmie points out in relation to the Anglo-Norman *Adam* play, the play text 'acknowledges the arbitrary nature of its props, gestures and signs from its very beginning'.¹⁵ This open acknowledgement of flexibility, or arbitrariness, is not naïve but rather a manifestation of a profoundly sophisticated dramatic tradition. Acknowledging the impossibility of perfect mimesis, playwrights used the gloss as much as the narration to emphasize to the public the adaptive nature of their production, adapted to the means of the organizers. The function of Prologue as *glosateur* is strongly reminiscent of the tradition of mimed Mystery plays (in Royal entries, for example).

In the above-mentioned passage, the Prologue asks the audience to imagine the time spent by the character in a particular location. He invites the audience to visualize to save time. This example of precise intervention calls for a flexible understanding of the interrelationships between prologue and Prologue. In other words, the Prologue can be a spoken stage direction or didaskalie, using the evocative nature of language to solve potential technical problems. The Prologue addresses the materiality of the performance making the audience aware of the difficulties of the performance. In the chosen example, the phrase 'I mention it briefly in a prologue' suggests a usage of the term prologue to include notes on the performance, notes that presuppose a dialogue between two discourses, the 'story'

¹⁴ *Les Mystères de la procession de Lille*, ed. by Knight, II, 156.308–10.

¹⁵ Jane Marianna Tolmie, 'Performing Eve in the Medieval Theatre' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Oxford, 2001), p. 55.

on the one hand and, on the other, the authoritative voice shaping that story in a manner not dissimilar to that of a modern-day director. The dialogue between 'diegesis' and authoritative aside challenges notions of dramatic illusion inherited from the Renaissance and suggests a more active role on the part of the audience. Other examples of such interventions by Prologues include disclosure of material constraints like money or space. For example, if in a biblical episode every character is said to ride a donkey, the Prologue may intervene to specify that the characters will go on foot in order to serve the play.¹⁶

There is no doubt that the character and role of the Messenger is the champion of geographical or spatial changes. He is sent from one location to another, moving freely where other characters are unable to move, and actually defining the spaces of the stage through his motion and words. He is the *agent de liaison* between characters and, by his movement on the set, he acts out the distance and the travelling. Most of the time he stabilizes the reality of the location by telling the audience when he arrives at his destination, fixing (creating) the location by his words. This device is similar to the one used by children when they state the conventions of their play, for example, transporting themselves to the Wild West just by saying that they will do this. The Messenger does not just fulfil his duty as Messenger; he also takes the liberty of drinking some wine, which provides the audience with another farcical moment not unlike one offered by the Stultus. The Messenger's defining property is the bottle, and the drinking scene is a *passage obligé* of the genre. Alcoholic beverages have often been used to suggest spatial movement and/or access to other worlds. With alcohol, time flies and mountains move, all contributing to quick changes in stage time and space.¹⁷ Rabelais also alludes to these conditions in his prologue to the *Gargantua*. There, the author addresses his readers as 'drunkards' in a subtle subversion of the genre of the prologue, preceding a story where the bottle and excesses are the main fuels of the fiction.

The Messenger has often been dismissed critically as a go-between whose sole function is to deliver messages, but in a genre where two major and diametrically opposed states exist, there needs to be special consideration given to a character who repeatedly travels between locations. The function of the Messenger goes further than his role in the delivery of the diegesis. By a convention of the stage, the Messenger speaks the name of his destination, say, for example, 'Egypt', and

¹⁶ *Les Mystères de la procession de Lille*, ed. by Knight, I, 429. 267–72.

¹⁷ On wine and the words used to describe it in old and middle French, see Albert Henry, *Contribution à l'étude du langage œnologique en langue d'oïl, (XII^e–XV^e siècle)*, 2 vols (Brussels: Académie Royale de Belgique, 1996).

by the power of that utterance he will be considered to be in that location. The stage is therefore a space that can be modified by words; it is fundamentally playful and it allows a great economy of scenery or machinery. The Messenger brings the action with him from point A to point B. Like an athlete taking part in a relay run and receiving the baton, he takes the action to another location and other players. By naming the space, he brings life to the decor and activates the dramatic machine. Two elements are necessary here: the movement towards a new location and the performative word in the new location, impregnating the empty space with purpose and meaning. In the *Mystère de sainte Barbe en cinq journées* the Messengers often carry with them a bottle of wine together with their 'rolet' (the roll where they record the messages they have to deliver):

Jamais neouldroye sejourner
 Tant que mon fait sera fourny.
 Savoir fault cy c'est ung ny
 De cest an ou de l'autre, ou que c'est ?
 Je m'y congnoys bien sans arest.
 Ma boutaille pleure des larmes
 Doulces. Est-ce point pour les ames
 Des trespasser? Ouy ce croy.
 Ces larmes sont douces, par foy,
 Et je vous jure par mon ame
 Que si les larmes de ma femme
 Estoient telles a savouréz,
 Souvent je la feroye plouréz
 Pour adoucir ma gorgette.
 [...] Or ay tant explecté la voye
 Que dedans ce palais vouldiz
 Voy le conestable gentilz. (fols 336^v–337^r)¹⁸

[I would not want to rest until my duty is done. It is important that I find out if the contents of this bottle is from this year or from another or what? I am a connoisseur that practises continuously. My bottle sheds sweet tears. Is it not for the souls of the dead? I believe so. These tears are sweet, by my faith, and I swear on my soul, that if the tears of my wife were so tasty, I would often make her cry to suit my little throat. Now, I have made such good time that in this vaulted palace I see the courtly Constable.]

¹⁸ Jacques Lemaire and I are preparing the complete critical edition of the unique and anonymous manuscript of *Le Mystère de sainte Barbe en cinq journées* (BnF fr. 976). See also Mario Longtin, 'Édition critique de la cinquième journée du Mystère de sainte Barbe en cinq journées (BnF fr. 976)' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Edinburgh, 2001); Jun-Han Kim, 'Le Mystère de sainte Barbe en cinq journées: Édition critique des deux premières journées d'après le manuscrit BnF fr. 976', 2 vols (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Paris IV-Sorbonne, 1998).

Under the influence of consumed wine the character is losing track of time. Through his discourse on wine and his conspicuous consumption in front of the public, he transforms the perception of time and space for the audience.

The Messenger identifies ‘space’ and ‘character’ in a manner similar to that of the Prologue. The Messenger’s narratives resemble the placards used to identify characters and spaces. They function as spoken stage directions, asides directed at the public, ensuring audience comprehension. Perhaps the Messenger also serves as an entertainment figure — an ‘act’ that allows the repositioning of the action, in a manner suggestively similar to that of the Stultus. In old and middle French, the ‘*messagier*’, the Messenger, is often referred to as the ‘*message*’, conflating role and message in a polysemic fashion. The Messenger literally becomes a living message. There is no doubt that he constitutes a suitable choice of character to deliver the Prologue, relaying a message from the organizers of the production to the audience, doing what he does best, transmitting news and greetings, lending his voice for a purpose.

The Messenger used as prologue appears in several Provençal Mystery plays.¹⁹ But I am concerned here primarily by the prologues written in Middle French. Koopmans mentions precisely such an example in a discussion of the structuring nature of the Messenger’s presence on stage. The passage, found in the *Mystère de Saint Louis*, shows the Messenger of the King, called Fleur-de-lis, sending the audience home at the end of the performance:

Adieu vous dy jusqu’a midi;
 Demain revenez, je vous prie;
 A .i. mot bref a tous je dy:
 Adieu jusqu’a demain midi.
 Cely qui sera plus hardi
 Veille ycy toute la nuitie.
 Adieu [vous dy jusqu’a midi];
 Demain [revenez, je vous prie]. (lines 14136–43)²⁰

[Farewell until noon, I say to you! Come back tomorrow, I beg you! In one brief word, I say to all of you: farewell until noon, I say to you! Who is bold enough shall spend the night here: Farewell until noon, I say to you! Come back tomorrow, I beg you!]

¹⁹ Carnahan, *The Prologue*, pp. 132–37.

²⁰ I am quoting the text from the most recent critical edition: ‘Jeu de saint Loÿs, édition critique du ms BnF fr. 24331’, ed. by Darwin Smith, 4 vols (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Paris III, 1987), p. 667. See also *Mystère de saint Louis, roi de France, publié pour la première fois d’après un manuscrit de la Bibliothèque nationale*, ed. by Francisque Michel (Nichols and Sons, printed for the Roxsburgh Club: Westminster, 1871).

Koopmans rightly points out that the role of the Messenger here is one of 'prolocutor/meneur de jeu'. He also mentions the importance of the poetic form of the rondeau triolet. The ternary structure of the rondeau establishes an aesthetic distance to the dramatic fiction. The form is easily identified by the spectators and makes them aware of a change about to take place. That structure marks a shift. This shift in the formalism of the language points to a *derealisation* of the fiction by means of aesthetization; it prompts a certain *décrochage* as the French actors would say. The scenes of Torturers at work on their victims are often written using the rondeau triolet. The very formalized language and the rhythm allow the description of otherwise gruesome scenes.

The messenger Fleur-de-lis in the passage dismisses the spectators but also 'begs' for their return. His status as messenger of the King of France makes him a very interesting character to be used as the voice of the organizers. Indeed, the authority given to him by his association with the King is bound to have inspired the *fatiste* to offer him the responsibility of inviting the spectators (subjects of the King of France both inside and outside of the performance) to come back the next day. This trait of genius from the *fatiste* shows that he was aware of the autoreflexive nature of drama and that he was prepared to use it to his advantage. Fleur-de-lis reveals also that what is shown to the spectators is fiction. Indeed, he clearly says that after the performance the reality of the spectacle will vanish, that the characters will disappear from the stage. The spectators can wait for them all night if they want, but as for the actors, they shall return the next day.

The Messenger and the Fool meet several times in the *Mistère de saint Quentin*.²¹ The episodes are almost identical: the Messenger asks the Fool whom he meets on the road for the way to his destination; a farcical exchange ensues and the Messenger realizes that he is already next to his destination. What is interesting here is that the Fool most frequently enters the diegesis specifically for scenes with the Messenger, whose transient nature seems to facilitate a link with the world outside the story. The two characters meet on the road away from any other character, in a liminal space. One is lost, the other has lost his mind; one is drunk, the other is insane. The nature of the Fool is such that he is able to jump in and out of the play's action, to offer commentary, to play with and on all teams without any clear affiliation. Through his interventions inside the story, the Stultus automatically affects temporality since he himself is of no reality and of no particular time.

²¹ Molinet, *Le Mistère de saint Quentin*, ed. by Henri Chatelain (Saint-Quentin: Imprimerie Générale, 1908), 452p.

One passage in the *Mistère de saint Quentin* merits further attention for it is a strong moment of drama. The scene shows the Messenger who decides to have a nap whilst waiting for another character. Meanwhile the Fool appears on stage. What follows is extraordinary:

LE FOL: [. . .] Voire, galant, dormés vous la,
 La guelle bee sans ronquier?
 Saint Jehan, je pouray bien drinquier
 A la boutaille pour recourse
 Et regarder en votre bourse
 Pour sçavoir s'il y a nulz dés:
 Il faut qu'il soit debrigandés
 De sa lance et que je luy rotte
 Et puis luy planteray marotte
 Entre deux bras, le vela bien!
Le Fol luy oste son baton et luy met sa marotte en sa main.
 Je suis ung messaiger de bien
 Pour dire les mos sans escripre.
 Marote, tien toi bien de rire,
 Au mains tant que je sois arriere,
 Je me tiray ung peu arriere
 Pour gaitier s'il ara houchue. (lines 23137–52)

[Hey squire, are you sleeping there, open mouthed but not snoring? By Saint John, I could easily drink from the bottle for my retreat and look in your purse to know if it hides any dice. He has to be relieved of his baton.²² I will take it away and then I will plant my mock sceptre between his two arms, that's very nice! (*The Fool takes his baton and puts the mock staff in his hand.*) I am a messenger of good when it comes to saying the words without writing. Sceptre, hold your laughs, at least until I have retired, I will go a bit further away and await trouble.]

This passage establishes the essential link that exists between the two characters. Furthermore it reveals another attribute of the Messenger. Not only does the Messenger have a wine bottle and a *role*, he also carries with him a symbolic sceptre. The Fool takes away the central attribute of the Messenger, the sceptre, and proffers instead the outward sign of his madness, the staff, to the Messenger. He literally becomes the Messenger for a time; perhaps the time of the Messenger's

²² I decided to translate *lance* as baton because the Fool swaps his mock staff for the symbolic representation of power owned by the Messenger. The attributes of the messenger are analysed in the following monograph by Jacques Merceron, *Le message et sa fiction: La communication par messenger dans la littérature française des XII^e et XIII^e siècles* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), p. 71.

dream? Order is turned upside down, and the bottle is the way by which madness enters the Messenger's discourse. It is interesting to note that wine is the first thing that the Fool mentions in the passage. It becomes apparent that the Fool's interaction with the Messenger is not mere chance, but is instead meaningful. The Messenger is the keeper of words, the one who bears and delivers meaning. The Fool's trick transforms the order of things and shakes the stability of character definition. By jeopardizing the order, the Fool forces the characters, and the audience, to question their role(s). The Messenger wakes up and asks himself, before realizing that he has been taken for a fool, 'Suis je ung fol en char et en os, | Ou suis je au paradis des sos?' (Am I a fool in flesh and bones or am I in fools' heaven?, lines 23158–59). This might just be an illustration of the familiar saying *taken for a fool*. As for the Fool in this particular passage, he does not show any existential questioning when he declares: 'I am a messenger of good when it comes to saying the words without writing'. He uses the switch of properties to further advance his function in the play. He is a Messenger of another kind, the kind that brings pleasure. The Fool's self-description is rather enigmatic, but the link between the characters is now fully established. The Fool's message is not sheer nonsense after all. The Fool suggests, again not unlike Rabelais's prologue to *Gargantua*, that there is more to meaning than surface meaning.²³

Scenes like the one found in the *Mistère de saint Quentin* can help towards understanding of the relationships that exist between Messenger and Stultus found in other Mystery plays.²⁴ A similar interaction to the one just described can be seen in the *Mystère de sainte Barbe en cinq journées*. A Messenger called Lancevant prepares to depart in the direction of his destination. He starts his journey by drinking wine from his bottle. The didaskalie mention *Vadat Lancevant et Stultus loquitur* (fol. 63^v). The passage is not as elaborate as some, that is, it does not include exchanges between the two characters. However, after the break in the Messenger's speech where the Stultus intervenes, the Messenger speaks again to tell the audience that he has drunk a large amount of wine and that

²³ See the invaluable edition provided by Mireille Huchon and her team of collaborators : François Rabelais, 'Prologue de l'auteur', in *Gargantua*, in *Œuvres complètes*, ed. by Mireille Huchon and others (Paris: Gallimard, 1994), pp. 5–8; see also the prologue's endnote number 2, pp. 1060–61.

²⁴ Manuscripts rarely record the Fool's interventions; a laconic *Stultus loquitur* given in the margin is all that usually tells us that he is speaking. However, in the *Mistère de saint Quentin*, there are numerous written interventions by the Stultus that shed light on the central role that he plays.

he has arrived at his destination. Perhaps, once again, the Fool's mere presence invites us to consider the links between sobriety and sanity on the one hand, and drunkenness and madness on the other.

The Fool does not simply function in relation to wine. By virtue of his externalized position in relation to the main thrust of the plot, he can both comment on the action and manifest shifts in time. Farcical interludes do divert the attention of the audience, allowing changes to be made to the set and positioning of the actors. Beyond that, however, he serves as a link between dramatic sections, restating a tacit suspension-of-disbelief contract between the players and the listeners, shaking the inertia of the audience. When his speeches end, the action restarts, thus (re)setting the scene. The most interesting aspect of the Fool's character is his capacity to drop in and out of the action, seemingly at will, being at the same time both actor and spectator. By his insubordinate presence he ties the play together, offering the necessary *distanciation* to allow the spectators to sit through an otherwise very long play. He relieves the tension, deflating emotionally charged moments, exposing theatrical conventions, establishing clearly the text as a construct. Here the time of the spectators and the time of the play merge into the present action. Here, the *Stultus* becomes the equivalent of our comedians, playing on the time, in the time, and for the time, thus reaffirming the pre-eminence of the spectacular over the literary.

The interventions of the Fool are not always as complex as those above. More often the function of the Fool is to make the public laugh by addressing the audience directly. The contents of his speeches are often scatological and resemble a medieval poetic form called *fatrasie*,²⁵ which is often linked to madness because the meanings of such pieces are not self-evident. *Fatrasie* works by accumulation, stratification, saturation, and association to produce a most intriguing discourse, a discourse fit for a Fool. As a matter of fact, the Fool's first intervention in the *Mistère de saint Quentin* describes the audience in front of him as an assembly of Fools, and more than that he declares that they are *his* fools, when he says (no doubt pointing appropriately to groups of spectators in the audience):

Et je voy assamblar mes fos
 Et tous mes philofoliens
 Desloïés vous de vos liens,
 Sos rabis cornus que limaches,
 Sos de court qui faictes grimaces. (lines 153–57)

²⁵ On the subject, see L. C. Porter, *La Fatrasie et le fatras, essai sur la poésie irrationnelle en France au Moyen Âge* (Geneva: Droz, 1960).

[And I see my fools assembled and all my 'philo-foolishers', free yourself from your ties, demented Fools with more horns than a slug, court Fools who make faces.]

With this irreverent greeting, the Fool infects the audience with his madness. He allocates roles to the spectators, assimilating them, and us, into the drama. The Fool uses the verb *voir* here: *je voys* (like the prologue in the *Mystère de sainte Barbe en deux journées*) to point out that the public, too, acts: just as the Prologue introduces characters, the Fool creates them, everyone becoming part of a *sottie*,²⁶ a Fool's play, both on and off stage.

The Fool's interventions also serve to bridge two very different registers of action. For example, at the end of a *diablerie* in the *Mistère de saint Quentin* (an episode in which the devils take to the stage to discuss their plans) the Fool appears to dedramatize and to ridicule what might have been a very impressive and frightening affair. His speech intertwines the comic and the fearful. He allows himself some fun describing the horrible appearances of the devils and bringing this horror to the attention of the public:

Petit enffans, mouchés vos nés,
 Diables sont hors de leur taniere;
 Regardés la les dominés,
 Comment ils ont noire paupiere;
 Je vorroye qu'i fut maniere
 Que vielles qui se remariant
 Trouvassent dedens leur litiere
 Telz geulz, quant elles s'apairent,
 Et que tous homes qui hairient
 Leurs femes par mordre ou griffer
 Fussent portés quant elles crient
 Au trou du cul de Lucifer. (lines 971–82)

[Small children, blow your noses, the devils are out of their retreat. See there the possessed, see how black their eyelids are. I wish there were a way that the old hags who remarry could find in their beds such rogues when they make out, and that all the men that brutalize their women by biting or clawing, were to be brought to the asshole of Lucifer.]

Here, the Fool picks on two generic comical figures, implying that those who are going to Hell are outside the audience thus reinforcing the unity of the group present at the performance. By pointing to condemnable behaviour within the community, the Fool abolishes judgements directed at particular individuals and

²⁶ On the genre of the *sottie*, see Olga Anna Dull, *Folie et rhétorique dans la sottie* (Geneva: Droz, 1994).

reduces the power of the *diablerie* by modifying its reception. The Fool's critical and interpretive work on the *diablerie* and on its reception is nowhere better shown than in a passage from the *Mistère de saint Quentin*. I will not quote from the text here as the puns are all in the rhymes and the translation would not show any of it (lines 4271–95). Nevertheless, it is easy to understand the mechanics of the passage from a quick outline. In the style of the *grands rhétoriciens*,²⁷ a character lists insults ending in *-eaux* and in *-aille*. The Fool follows with a speech in which he comments on the large number of words ending in *-aille* and launches into a parody of the style, demonstrating that the author of the *Mistère* is not taking himself too seriously and is aware of the fabricated nature of the speech. It also shows that the audience is receptive to language games and appreciative of the permutations and the different possibilities of the versification.

In the *Mystère de sainte Barbe en cinq journées* there is only one recorded Fool's speech.²⁸ But the absence of a text does not mean that analysis of the traces of a character's presence cannot be attempted. I mentioned earlier the frequently deployed stage direction stating that the Fool is speaking: *Stultus loquitur*. This stage direction, which is found throughout the Mystery plays, tells us a great deal. For example, when Barbara has to read several books given to her by the doctors devoted to her education, the direction *Stultus loquitur* appears in the play text margin followed by *Pausa*.²⁹ *Barbara studeat libros et post ea dicat* (fol. 19^v). Here the Fool's duty is to amuse the public whilst Barbara reads the books given by her professors. The Fool is clearly linked in this instance to the passage of time; the contents of his speech are not known, but the Fool found in the *Mistère de saint Quentin* gives a fair idea of its flavour.

The *Mystère de la Passion de Troyes* presents a prologue delivered by the Fool that conforms to what we have said about this character until now. At the end of the morning performance of the Mystery, the actors stay on stage to eat lunch.

²⁷ See on the subject of the *grands rhétoriciens* Paul Zumthor, *Le Masque et la lumière: poétique des grands rhétoriciens* (Paris: Seuil, 1978); see also his *Anthologie des grands rhétoriciens* (Paris: Union générale d'éditions, 1978).

²⁸ I have analysed this specific passage in 'Le Mystère de sainte Barbe en cinq journées et sa farce', in *Maine belle œuvre faite: Études sur le théâtre médiéval offertes à Graham A. Runnalls*, ed. by Denis Hüe, Mario Longtin, and Lynette Muir (Orléans: Paradigme, 2005), pp. 345–60.

²⁹ To learn more about the meaning of the 'Pausa', see Mario Longtin, 'Conventions de lecture: la Pausa dans le Mystère de sainte Barbe en cinq journées', in *Langues, codes et conventions dans l'ancien théâtre: Actes du troisième Colloque international sur l'ancien théâtre européen* (Tours, 23–24 septembre 99), ed. by J.-P. Bordier (Paris: Champion, 2002), pp. 83–92.

The didaskalie mentions: *Cy se fera disner* (Here will be lunch). After that interval *Le Sot* is the first to take to the stage, opening his speech with a poetic form called *rondeau triolet*:

LE SOT: Avez vous mengé la dodine?
 Il faut servir d'un autre metz.
 Comment se galant la choppine!
 Avez vous mengé la dodine?
 Sortez, Sortez de la cuysine,
 Vous n'en voudrés partir jamais!
 Avez vous mengé la dodine?
 Il faut servir d'un autre metz.
 [...]
 N'est il pas temps qu'on recommence?
 Je m'en vois, moy et ma marotte,
 En quelque lieu faire scillence.³⁰

[THE FOOL: Did you eat the chicken in white sauce? We have to serve another kind of meal. See how this lover drinks! Did you eat the chicken in white sauce? Get out, get out of the kitchen! Will you ever leave the place! Did you eat the chicken in white sauce? We have to serve another kind of meal. Isn't it time to restart? I will go, me and my fool's staff in some *lieu* to be silent.]

The *fatiste* of this Mystery plays suggests by the prologue of the Fool a link between the kitchen and a space that is reserved for actors, a kind of backstage space. But he may also be trying to parody the scream of Lucifer at the beginning of *diableries*, a scream that prompts the devils to populate the stage. Indeed, Lucifer often refers to the kitchen of Hell and to the cauldron, not to mention the different sauces in which the souls might be cooking. Here is an example of such a speech delivered by Lucifer and taken from the *Mystère de saint Martin*: 'Sortez, sortez, grans deables infernaux, | Laissez en paix chaudières, fours, fourneaux'³¹ (Get out, Get out, great infernal devils, Leave your cauldrons, your ovens and stoves in peace). The Fool appears to offer a parody of Lucifer calling his devils, only here he (the Fool) is calling the actors, hence playing again the autoreflexive card. Furthermore, the Fool says that the players have to serve another kind of meal. Usually the executioners are the ones saying that to their victims before they get to work, hiding the surprise of what torments they will inflict. Therefore, the

³⁰ *Le Mystère de la Passion de Troyes*, ed. by Jean-Claude Bibolet, 2 vols (Geneva: Droz, 1987), lines 3215–30, I, 138.

³¹ *Le Mystère de saint Martin 1496*, ed. by André Duplat (Geneva: Droz, 1979), lines 2076–77, p. 218.

Fool suggests the artificial nature of what is going to be performed: it is a meal prepared by a group of actors, a surprise hidden until now but that will be revealed to the audience. The culinary metaphor ends with the *rondeau*. The use of this poetic, as we have seen earlier with reference to the Messenger, once again signals a shift, and by the same token it reinforces the distance created by the Fool to the dramatic illusion. Indeed the word 'restart' makes clear to the audience the fictional nature of the adventure. Already the real meal on a stage has given the audience a clear understanding of the amount of flexibility needed on their part. The prologue spoken by the Fool on the very topic of the meal, fictionalizing it, making it dramatic by a series of auto-references to the genre of the Mystery play, shows up a deliberate attempt to unveil the structure of the play. In so doing this speech of the Fool demonstrates that the conventions of the Mystery plays were perfectly assimilated by the audience, allowing the actor to play with different levels of the dramatic fiction.

One thing emerges from analysing the three characters together: their great versatility in modifying the dramatic fiction by their interventions. All three characters have been shown to penetrate the illusion of realism by playing on, up, and with staging conventions. They are concrete examples of the autoreflexive nature of late medieval theatre. The glossing voice, be it that of the Prologue, the Messenger, or the Fool, does not double or reflect the action in a naïve way. The gloss shapes the space relying on the imagination of the audience for greater effect. The presence of single or multiple glossing voices is one of the defining traits of the medieval French stage and should not be dismissed as the by-product of a crude misconception of the medium that is theatre. It is a convention of distinct kind, linked to the materiality of the stage. Glosses found in French Mystery plays are performative and should not be studied in any simple binary way: for example, narration versus action or even prologue versus text of the play. I have tried to suggest that glossing characters are by nature structuring ones and should be given more importance critically. The Prologue, the Messenger, and the Fool are structuring characters, prompters of the action. They are star players in a complex game. Their interventions break up the linearity of diegesis and they impose their own rhythms on the *jeu*. When analysed together, the Prologue, the Messenger, and the Fool reveal that they are framing entities devised to serve not merely at the textual level but in a much larger dramatic capacity — the service of theatre.

‘PERCHANCE YOU WONDER AT THIS SHOW’:
DRAMATURGICAL MACHINERY IN *A MIDSUMMER*
NIGHT’S DREAM AND ‘PYRAMUS AND THISBE’

Tom Pettitt

Whatever they may be by way of achievements of dramatic art, Shakespeare’s plays are also substantial essays, by a well-qualified observer, on the sustained, rapid advances in skills and capabilities enabled by the professionalization of the post-medieval English theatre, not least with regard to the dramaturgical machinery which is the focus of this collection of essays.

For the purposes of what follows it will be useful to distinguish within that machinery between inwardly and outwardly orientated procedures. The inwardly orientated procedures are those concerned with ‘making it work’, and they contribute to achieving a performance by ensuring that the performers do and say what is necessary at the right time and in the right place. These processes encompass prompting for the verbal aspect of the performance, in-performance directing for the physical aspect, and stage management for the purely physical business of getting objects and properties onto and off the acting area. The outwardly orientated procedures are those concerned with ‘getting it across’ and ensure that the audience understands what is going on in the play by supplementing regular mimetic resources with devices such as narration and explication. Both sets of procedures can be achieved by extra-dramatic figures specifically designated for the procedures concerned. The prompter, the director, and the stagehand fulfil the inwardly orientated processes, and the prologue or chorus may carry out the outwardly orientated procedures. Equally, the characters themselves can also execute the inwardly orientated procedures by prompting and directing each other, and by moving scenic furniture or carrying portable properties. Characters may also discharge the outwardly orientated procedures by supplying each other with narration and explication which is actually for the benefit of the audience.

Although the process was never fully completed in his time, Shakespeare's generation saw the emergence of theatre as an independent cultural system detached from its origins in late medieval household performance culture. It is probably no coincidence that this went hand in hand with the growing independence of the play world from the world in which the play was performed, achieved not least by a shift from overt to covert dramaturgical machinery.¹ In the earlier, 'medieval' phase, with little by way of stage, scenery, or lighting to set off the play world from the domestic context of performance, the audience is likely to have remained aware of the play as performance as well as a world of its own, and of the players as performers — perhaps even as known individuals — as well as characters. Dramaturgical machinery could accordingly afford to be overt — visible and/or audible: there was little or no dramatic illusion vulnerable to subversion by discernible prompting, directing, or stage management, or explication and narrative openly directed at the audience. With a wider range of mimetic resources for creating an independent play world (not least scenery and lighting), the mature theatre prefers to protect the latter's integrity by deploying dramaturgical machinery in a more covert fashion.

Rather than the prefaces and prologues favoured by Jonson, Shakespeare's commentary and analysis are conveyed by the characteristic metadramatic quality of his plays, which, as Anne Richter perceptively observes, seems to have compensated for the decline of the overt procedures of an earlier phase which sustained the audience's awareness of being at a performance.² Howard Felperin suggests moreover that Shakespeare deliberately explores the effect of juxtaposing the state-of-the-art dramaturgy of his own plays with the older modes he reproduces in the performances inserted in them:

The evidence suggests that Shakespeare, far from being an unwitting medium of theatrical change through whose pen archaism and naturalism flow in proportions varying with the date of a given play, is rather the deliberate mediator of theatrical change, concentrating his archaism at certain points, fully aware of the outmodedness of the forms and figures at his disposal.³

¹ The process has been charted in Anne Richter's *Shakespeare and the Idea of the Play* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1962; repr. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967), in relation to whose remarks concerning *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (particularly pp. 97–99) the present essay has the status of a respectful elaboration.

² Richter, *Shakespeare and the Idea of the Play*, p. 58.

³ Howard Felperin, *Shakespearean Representation: Mimesis and Modernity in Elizabethan Tragedy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), p. 59.

Against this background, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, hailed by James L. Calderwood as a major instance of 'Shakespeare's exploration of the nature, function and value of dramatic art',⁴ acquires a particular significance: it is his only play in which a fully fledged play-within-the-play is performed in its entirety (the equivalent performance in *Hamlet* being notoriously interrupted), and the dramaturgical symbiosis between host play and inserted play is particularly intense and complex. The former as we have it is a product of the Elizabethan theatre — the first quarto of 1600 advertised as having 'been sundry times publickely acted, by the Right honourable, the Lord Chamberlaine his seruants'⁵ — while the performance of 'Pyramus and Thisbe' it contains is part of what audiences are likely to have recognized as an accurate reconstruction of the wedding revels of an English nobleman, to which representatives of a dependent neighbouring community have brought their performance as a customary gesture of courtesy.⁶ By inserting a traditional medieval performance into a professional Elizabethan stage-play, Shakespeare is juxtaposing his own dramatic art with its immediate antecedents, effectively demonstrating the advances which had occurred over the last generation or two.⁷ The effect is somewhat confused however by the multifaceted parody which is also operative in the scenes involving the mechanicals' performance and

⁴ James L. Calderwood, *Shakespearean Metadrama* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1971), p. 123.

⁵ *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, ed. by R. A. Foakes, New Cambridge Shakespeare (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984; repr. 1990), p. 135; in what follows the play will be cited from this edition. Unless otherwise specified, quotations and citations of other Shakespeare plays are taken from *The Norton Shakespeare*, ed. by Stephen Greenblatt and others (New York: Norton, 1997).

⁶ See my 'Midsummer Metadrama: "Pyramus and Thisbe" and Early English Household Theatre', *Angles*, 5 (2005), 31–43. For the suggestion that craftsmen (like our 'mechanicals') made the transition from community drama to professional playing via household theatre, see Peter H. Greenfield, "'All for your delight / We are not here": Amateur Players and the Nobility', *Research Opportunities in Renaissance Drama*, 28 (1985), 173–80.

⁷ To avoid circular argument, from time to time in what follows the characterization of features of the dramaturgical machinery in 'Pyramus and Thisbe' as pre-theatrical will be backed by appeal to texts and accounts either of medieval interludes (English or European) or of later traditions of folk-drama, such as the English mummers' plays, which, if they are not directly descended from medieval dramatic custom, at least match so much of its auspices and materials as to qualify as corroboration on other aspects. On the relationships between interludes (including 'Pyramus and Thisbe') and later folk drama, see my studies 'Tudor Interludes and the Winter Revels', *Medieval English Theatre*, 6 (1984), 16–27, and "'This man is Pyramus": A Pre-History of the English Mummers' Plays', *Medieval English Theatre*, 22 (2001 [for 2000]), 70–99.

their preparations for it. Perspectives are further multiplied by cross-over elements between the inserted play and the host play. 'Pyramus and Thisbe' is essentially a revels interlude which (at least in rehearsal) is also associated with certain aspects of the Elizabethan stage, whereas *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is an Elizabethan stage-play to which is also attributed certain features of medieval household revels.

While Quince and his company ultimately perform a show under the auspices of customary household theatre (ducal wedding-revels), as they *prepare* for the occasion they anachronistically see themselves as Elizabethan professionals rehearsing a stage-play. Approving of the forest venue for their rehearsal, Quince speaks of it in terms of a playhouse — 'This green plot shall be our stage, this hawthorn brake our tiring-house' (III. 1. 3–4) — and they move at once into a discussion of the dangers of under-distancing the audience in a way that is more appropriate to the illusion-creating resources of the professional stage. In committing suicide, Pyramus 'must draw a sword to kill himself, which the ladies cannot abide?' (III. 1. 9–10), and the latter will also be seriously alarmed by the Lion: 'to bring in (God shield us!) a lion among ladies is a most dreadful thing; for there is not a more fearful wildfowl than your lion living; and we ought to look to't' (III. 1. 24–26).

It is symptomatic that Bottom now refers to their play as a 'comedy' (he does the same at IV. 2. 34), reflecting a theatrical ambience. Quince had earlier referred to the work as an 'interlude' (I. 3. 5), the term also used of it during the performance itself (V. 1. 153). This merely makes it all the more ludicrous that in each case the proposed solution to their problem is highly untheatrical. The answer appears to be concerned with explicit exposition to the audience — in the case of the swords deploying the vehicle of the prologue to explain that 'we will do no harm with our swords, and that Pyramus is not killed indeed; and for the more better assurance, tell them that I, Pyramus, am not Pyramus, but Bottom the weaver' (III. 1. 14–17). In the matter of the lion the problem is to be resolved by a self-presentation by the performer, reinforced by an illusion-breaking adjustment of his costume. Bottom says:

half his face must be seen through the lion's neck, and he himself must speak through, saying thus, [...] 'Ladies [...] I would entreat you, not to fear, not to tremble: my life for yours. If you think, I come hither as a lion, it were pity of my life. No, I am no such thing; I am a man, as other men are' — and there indeed let him name his name, and tell them plainly he is Snug the joiner. (III. 1. 28–35)

Paradoxically, but appropriately under the circumstances, this is effectively the reverse of exposition, as defined above and whose function is to be supportive of the play world in order to reinforce mimetic resources by explaining to the

audience that during the performance a given player should be taken as representing a particular character. Indeed, this is what occurs in the subsequent solution for achieving moonshine where: 'one must come in with a bush of thorns and a lantern, and *say he comes to [...] present* the person of Moonshine' (III. 1. 46–48, my emphasis). In the case of Pyramus and the Lion, in contrast, exposition is designed to be *subversive* of the play world, undermining mimesis by explaining that this character is actually this player. The achievement of the effect aimed at in the performance is duly registered by the Duke's query, presumably on seeing Snug's incompletely hidden face: 'I wonder if the lion be to speak?' (V. 1. 151). It is only to the extent that Quince and the Mechanicals see themselves, and persuade their audience to see them, from the perspective of the Elizabethan stage that 'Pyramus and Thisbe' qualifies as, in Anne Righter's term, a 'wild parody of a play':⁸ as a medieval *interlude* it is dramaturgically conventional.

Conversely, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* as a whole has some kind of relationship to precisely the kind of household revels auspices it constructs for 'Pyramus and Thisbe'. There is much about the play which would have made it appropriate for performance at wedding revels, so much so that a number of specific weddings have been suggested as its original auspices. To whatever else has been offered on the matter,⁹ it can be added that *A Midsummer Night's Dream* itself actually comprises the two-part show customary at such revels. The interlude concludes with the departure of the romantic protagonists to enjoy their wedding night (V. 1. 348) where the concluding line is properly assigned to the socially senior character on stage. It is followed by a detachable disguising that might properly be designated a masque of fairies, presented by Puck and largely comprising the dancing of Titania and Oberon and their trains (V. 1. 349–400). In this *A Midsummer Night's Dream* matches on a larger scale the revels show it incorporates, the Mechanicals offering Theseus not merely their 'interlude' of 'Pyramus and Thisbe' but also a masked dance (Bergomask; V. 1. 333–34).

Whatever the auspices for which *A Midsummer Night's Dream* may have been intended originally, the text we have is emphatically a stage-play.¹⁰ But it is one

⁸ Righter, *Shakespeare and the Idea of the Play*, p. 21 (my emphasis).

⁹ See for example Paul Olsen, 'A Midsummer Night's Dream and the Meaning of Court Marriage', *English Literary History*, 24 (1957), 95–119; Paul N. Siegel, 'A Midsummer Night's Dream and the Wedding Guests', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 4 (1953), 139–44.

¹⁰ For a vigorous argument in favour of the play's playhouse auspices, see Gary Jay Williams, *Our Moonlight Revels: A Midsummer Night's Dream in the Theatre* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1997), ch. 1, 'The Wedding-Play Myth and the *Dream* in Full Play'.

which successfully constructs for itself, within the playhouse, the ambience of aristocratic wedding revels it creates for 'Pyramus and Thisbe' within its play world. Revels are effectively the *implied* auspices of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, in the same way that a book has an implied reader.¹¹ The relationship between host play and inserted performance here is as accurately characterized by the perception of Howard Felperin, as the other celebrated example of Shakespearean metadrama that he actually addresses:

In *The Murder of Gonzago*, the archaic center of *Hamlet*, we watch Shakespeare's play approach and embrace, as it were, its own archaic prototype, only to turn and flee it in an almost choreographic pattern of meeting and parting.¹²

Making it Work

Prompting

In the nature of things there is little direct evidence of overt prompting in connection with medieval household drama, but intriguing instances have been observed recently in the analogous, possibly derivative but definitely living, tradition of the English mummers' plays. For example, performances of their traditional *Recruiting Sergeant* play by the 'Ploughboys' of Tollerton, Nottinghamshire, have of late included a character called the Nurse, suitably costumed and plausibly accompanying the Doctor figure who 'cures' whoever is killed in the customary death-and-revival sequence of English folk drama. There is no Nurse figure in the Tollerton Plough Play as performed up to the 1950s, however,¹³ and indeed she was added in connection with a more recent revival to function as onstage prompter, to which end she carries a clip-board to which is affixed the script of the play, presumably masquerading as patient journals. While this renders the presence of both prompter and script eminently plausible, she has nonetheless been provided

¹¹ See my 'Midsummer Metadrama'.

¹² Felperin, *Shakespearean Representation*, p. 60. See also the remark by Andrew D. Weiner, approaching the subject from a different perspective in his "Multiformitie Uniforme": *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *English Literary History*, 38 (1971), 329–49 (p. 335): 'By insisting upon the identity in kind of his play and that of the rude mechanicals, Shakespeare is insisting that we recognize the qualitative differences between the two plays and react accordingly.'

¹³ Marjorie Shepherd 'The Plough Boys (from Tollerton, Nottinghamshire)', *Vaughan Williams Memorial Library Collection*, Jan. 1950, transcribed at <<http://www.folkplay.info/Texts/95sk63sm.htm>>.

with an apologetic self-presentation explaining her extra-dramatic function. And one feels that Bottom (having suggested that the Moon in 'Pyramus and Thisbe' be represented by the real moon shining through a window) might also have appreciated the circumstance that the performer really is (or recently was) a nurse from one of the local hospitals.¹⁴ In kindly providing these specifications, folklorist Peter Millington offers some other extremely pertinent observations from his extensive fieldwork on mummers' play performance:

I have rarely seen a special prompter, although it does happen. On a couple of occasions, I've seen one of the hangers-on following the script and providing prompts as necessary. However, the nature of the plays is such that many of the players will know the whole script off by heart, and so they generally tend to help each other out. Although they may whisper the missing words in classic prompter fashion, they can be quite creative in their approach. For instance, if hypothetically the Farmer's Man came to a stop half way through his speech, one of the other characters might ask, 'Can you plough straight?' effectively telling the actor that his lines continue: 'How straight I go from end to end [...]'. The audience may be aware of the gaffe, but often seem to appreciate this kind of cover-up.¹⁵

In connection with prompting, an elegant piece of theatrical self-awareness may be noted in Shakespeare's having Quince assign 'the lion's part' (I. 2. 53) to the performer who had most need of a prompter, Snug the joiner, who asks anxiously: 'Have you the lion's part written? Pray you, if it be, give it me; for I am slow of study' (I. 2. 54–55). Quince reassures him, 'You may do it extempore; for it is nothing but roaring' (I. 2. 56), and audiences may have caught what was evidently a reference to the 'roarers' of London street culture, analogues or even antecedents of the rappers of African American vernacular tradition, and equally given to set-piece exchanges of improvised insults (like 'the dozens') deploying colourful aspersions on the sexual proclivities of the opponent's mother.¹⁶

¹⁴ Peter Millington, personal communication, elaborating on his photographs of performances, with accompanying notes, from the performance seasons (around Twelfth Night) of 2001–02 and 2004–05, posted on the Web site of the Traditional Drama Research Group, at <www.folkplay.info/Gallery/Tollerton2002.htm> and <www.folkplay.info/Gallery/Tollerton2005.htm>, respectively.

¹⁵ Peter Millington, personal communication; quoted with his permission and my thanks.

¹⁶ Discussed in my unpublished essay, "'The Lion's Part': Some Afro-Elizabethan Compatibilities', *Odense American Studies International Series, Working Paper No. 12* (September, 1994). The 'Roaring Girl' of the Jacobean play of the same name is one such, although the plot gives her no occasion to engage in the exchange-of-insults game. There is an extended example of this however in the scene set in a 'roaring school' in Thomas Middleton and Thomas Rowley's

Its performance at the wedding revels of Theseus and Hippolyta is not the first we see or hear of 'Pyramus and Thisbe', and these preliminaries can also be informative, not least the first — and thoroughly disastrous — rehearsal. Since the only later rehearsal we hear of reduced the ducal Master of the Revels to tears of mirth (v. 1. 66–70), things do not seem to have improved much in the interim, and this rehearsal scene (III. 1) might be taken as suggesting unscripted business during the actual performance at the wedding revels, not least with regard to prompting, given the 'unbreathed memories' (v. 1. 74) of the performers, who have memorized their parts 'with cruel pain' (v. 1. 80).

For example since in the rehearsal Quince angrily corrects Flute's 'Ninny's tomb' (III. 1. 79) — 'Ninus' tomb, man!' (III. 1. 80) — he is likely to react similarly when Bottom makes the same mistake in performance (v. 1. 197), and even more so when Flute does it again (v. 1. 247). Having no role other than Presenter, in which he emphatically got 'Ninus' right himself (v. 1. 137), Quince will undoubtedly have functioned as stage manager and prompter for the performance. Peter Holland concurs, but in suggesting that Quince is perhaps heard correcting 'Ninny' to 'Ninus' 'from the prompter's seat', speaks anachronistically in terms more appropriate of modern theatres which have the prompter's seat under a canopy over a hole in the front of the stage, or at least implies an offstage prompter (heard but not seen).¹⁷ In a banquet hall without a stage (which is what the playhouse stage is here re-creating), Quince is more likely to have remained visible to both audiences (onstage and playhouse) at the edge of the acting area.¹⁸

To judge from occasional references Elizabethan acting companies did make use of a prompter in the playhouse, although recent experience at the rebuilt

A Fair Quarrel (c. 1615), ed. by R. V. Holdsworth, New Mermaids (London: Benn, 1974), IV. 1. 89–197 (and see also IV. 4. 53ff.). The roarers are discussed in Holdsworth's Introduction, pp. xiv–xv.

¹⁷ *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, ed. by Peter Holland, Oxford Shakespeare (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994; repr. 1998), note to v. 1. 201.

¹⁸ It is sometimes suggested that Pyramus's hesitation in his lamentation for his beloved, 'Which is — no, no, which was — the fairest dame' (v. 1. 287), represents Bottom making a mistake and just managing to correct himself before the prompter intervenes. *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, ed. by Holland, note to v. 1. 287). 'Which was the fairest dame' makes a metrically incomplete line, but, interestingly, the next line also has Bottom apparently fishing for the right word: 'That lived, that loved, that liked, that looked with cheer' (v. 1. 288), and assuming that both times he got it right in the end, the 'correct' line (out of which his repetitions made two) is a satisfactorily iambic pentameter: 'Which was the fairest dame that looked with cheer'.

Globe in London suggests verbal communication through its backstage facade is extremely difficult: fascinating late 1990s performances at the Globe by the Original Shakespeare Company seeking to reproduce Elizabethan acting conditions had to use a prompter sitting at a desk backstage in full view of the audience.¹⁹ The surviving text of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* can of course tell us nothing about the prompting procedures deployed during its playhouse performances, but it does contain some dramaturgically intriguing moments in which the text seems to obviate the need for a prompter:

COBWEB. And I.
 MOTH. And I.
 MUSTARDSEED. And I. (III. 1. 138–40).
 [...]

 COBWEB. Hail!
 MOTH. Hail!
 MUSTARDSEED. Hail! (III. 1. 154–56)²⁰

In both instances the speeches of Moth and Mustardseed are identical with their cues.

These are however exceptional circumstances, and these verbally spoon-fed and dramaturgically shepherded junior fairies will be met under other headings. But this is perhaps merely an extreme form of a prompting device built into Elizabethan play-texts (and significantly absent from 'Pyramus and Thisbe') in which a character's cue — the last words of the preceding speech by another character — is repeated at the beginning of his own speech. This technique is particularly associated with clowns, and usually heralds some kind of riposte to what has just been said, as here in the B-Text of Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*:

WAGNER. Come hither, sirrah *boy*.

ROBIN. '*Boy*'? O, disgrace to my person! Zounds, '*boy*' in your face! You have seen many boys with beards, I am sure. (B. I. 4. 1–4)²¹

¹⁹ Based on my observation of historically very revealing performances of *King John* in 1998 and *Pericles* in 1999. The company's Web site seems to have been dismantled, but see the study by the company's founder, Patrick Tucker, *Secrets of Acting Shakespeare: The Original Approach* (London: Routledge, Chapman & Hall, 2001).

²⁰ Moth's participation in this sequence, and the order of the responses, are however a result of modern editorial intervention: both early texts assign a 'Haile mortall, haile' to a first (unnamed) fairy, and a hail each to a second and third.

²¹ Christopher Marlowe, *Doctor Faustus*, ed. by David Bevington and Eric Rasmussen, The Revels Plays (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993).

If not a universal feature of clown and straight-man routines (building up expectation for the punch-line) this technique may have developed as a breathing space in which to recall the rest of the speech or improvise a substitute. It does not feature explicitly as a functional feature in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, although it may loom beneath one of the angry exchanges between the girls at a tense phase of the love-plot where Helena says: 'Fie, fie, you counterfeit, you puppet, you!' And Hermia replies "Puppet"? Why so? — Ay, that way goes the game' (III. 2. 288–89). The device is twice repeated immediately (III. 2. 303–05: 'lower . . . Lower?'; III. 2. 324–26: 'little . . . Little?').

Getting On

Evidently lacking the theatre's 'plot' hung up backstage and informing the players which scenes they were in and what properties they should carry,²² Quince (at least in the rehearsal) prepares his performers verbally:

Pyramus, you begin. When you have spoken your speech, enter into that brake, and so everyone according to his cue. (III. 1. 57–59)

And when they are ready: 'Speak, Pyramus! Thisbe stand forth!' (III. 1. 64). After his speech Pyramus duly goes off, leaving Flute, as Thisbe, to wonder 'Must I speak now?' (III. 1. 72). Assured that 'Ay, marry must you' (III. 1. 73), Flute launches into a speech which prompts one of Shakespearean metadrama's most celebrated reproductions of a performance under stress:

FLUTE (as Thisbe). Most radiant Pyramus, most lilywhite of hue,
Of colour like the red rose on triumphant briar,
Most brisky juvenal, and eke most lovely Jew,
As true as truest horse that yet would never tire,
I'll meet thee, Pyramus, at Ninny's tomb — (III. 1. 75–79)

Having corrected 'Ninny' as seen earlier, Quince goes on to expostulate: 'you must not speak that yet; that you answer to Pyramus. You speak all your part at once, cues and all' (III. 1. 80–81).

Elizabethan players were given only a roll comprising their own speeches (which accordingly constituted a 'rôle'), each prefaced by a cue-line from the end

²² Michael Hattaway, *Elizabethan Popular Theatre* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982), p. 54.

of the preceding speech by another character,²³ and we may expect the same to have been true of their medieval antecedents (Quince's players are given their 'parts' at their first meeting, I. 2. 78). But it is difficult to see that Quince is actually correct with regard to Thisbe speaking 'cues and all'. These would by definition encompass the last words of speeches by Pyramus, and none of the lines Flute speaks seems to qualify;²⁴ conversely there is nothing wrong in Flute speaking — as indeed he does — the end of his own (Thisbe) speech which simultaneously functions as a cue for Bottom. What *is* evident however, and more interesting for present purposes, is that Flute has gone on beyond the end of one of his (Thisbe's) speeches and started on his (her) next. Taking them back over the ground, Quince notes that this also involves Bottom (as Pyramus) missing *his* cue, not merely to speak but to come on: 'Pyramus, enter — your cue is past. It is "never tire"' (III. 1. 82). They get it right the second time (III. 1. 83–85). In a perceptive discussion of this moment, Tiffany Stern thinks through the challenge this cue is likely to have presented to the Elizabethan actor playing Bottom playing Pyramus. While Thisbe's first 'never tire' was a cue for Bottom-as-Pyramus to which he failed to respond, for the actor playing Bottom it was emphatically not a cue, and he should not respond to it, although his next cue was indeed 'never tire', but as spoken by Flute/Thisbe on the second run-through.²⁵

Similarly, although the moment is confused by an intervention from the stage audience, it looks very much as if on the night Flute (as Thisbe) misses his first entry cue and has to be directed from on stage by Bottom:

BOTTOM (as Pyramus) . . .

Cursed be thy stones for thus deceiving me!

THESEUS. The wall, methinks, being sensible, should curse again.

BOTTOM. No, in truth sir, he should not. 'Deceiving me' is Thisbe's cue. She is to enter now, and I am to spy her through the wall. You shall see it will fall pat as I told you.

Yonder [spoken with some relief?] she comes.

Enter Flute as Thisbe.

²³ See Foakes, note to III. 1. 81–82.

²⁴ The situation is complicated by the different handling of this scene in the version of the interlude actually staged: there Bottom *does* have a line (functioning as a cue for Flute): 'Wilt thou at Ninny's tomb met me straightway' (v. 1. 197).

²⁵ Tiffany Stern, *Making Shakespeare: From Stage to Page* (London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 123–24: this nonetheless does not solve the problem of the 'cues and all' Thisbe is said to have spoken, and Stern misattributes one of Thisbe's lines to Quince.

But perhaps we should not be too hard on Flute-as-Thisbe in expecting reaction to a merely verbal cue. Much later, as Bottom awakes after his 'dream' and still thinks he is waiting in the 'tiring house' during the rehearsal, he seems to expect his cue to be supplemented by someone explicitly directing him to re-enter the acting area:

When my cue comes, *call me*, and I will answer. My next is 'Most fair Pyramus'.
(IV. 1. 197–98, my emphasis)

Perhaps he is thinking of a traditional solution (under non-professional auspices) that may be seen to survive in the mummers' plays, where the heralding (for the audience) of the entrance of new characters is simultaneously a direction, or a 'calling on' of the actor concerned:

Enter St George and clear the way!
[...]
A room, a room, ye gallants!
Room!
And let the gallant soldier in!
[...]
A room, a room, ye gallants!
Room!
And let the English lady in!²⁶

This is a far cry from the sophisticated stagecraft of the Elizabethan theatre, and the performers of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* seem to have managed without being overtly called on,²⁷ although there is a striking reversion to tradition in

²⁶ Hero Combat Play from Broadway, Worcestershire (as recorded in late nineteenth century), in Alex Helm, *The English Mummers and their Plays* (Woodbridge: Brewer, 1980), pp. 34–6, lines 14, 42–44, 53–55. On the other hand, there is an instance in *The Interlude of Youth* where the mere mention of a character is attributed the status of calling him into the acting area:

YOUTH. Iwis, my brother Riot would help me
For to beat Charity
And his brother too.

RIOT. Huffa, huffa! who calleth after me? (lines 207–10)
Two Tudor Interludes: The Interludes of Youth and Hick Scorer, ed. by Ian Lancashire, The Revels Plays (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1980).

²⁷ With the perhaps predictable exception of the smaller fairies whom we have already seen being helped along by prompting built into the script, one instance of which was prefaced by a calling-on: 'TITANIA. Peaseblossom, Cobweb, Moth, and Mustardseed!' (III. 1. 136). A stage direction, *Enter four Fairies*, at his point in the quarto text makes it clear that Titania's exclamation is effectively a calling-on rather than addressed to figures already on stage.

Puck's heralding of the entrance of Oberon: 'room, Fairy: here comes Oberon' (II. 1. 58). This is not as dramaturgically significant as it may seem, however, as in late medieval and early modern society the procedure with its characteristic cry was one of the tasks of the ushers of great men, forcing a path for them through crowds in streets and great halls.²⁸

In-performance Direction

Once in the acting area and participating in the action, players need to know what to do and when to do it. It is a discernible feature of the overt dramaturgical machinery of 'Pyramus and Thisbe' that a good deal of in-performance direction is supplied by the dialogue itself, not least in lines assigned to Bottom as Pyramus:

Thou wall, O wall, O sweet and lovely wall,
Show me thy chink, to blink through with mine eyne.
Thanks, courteous wall; (v. 1. 173–75)

O, [to Thisbe] kiss me through the hole of this vile wall! (v. 1. 195)
Moon, take thy flight. (v. 1. 289)

To this could be added what may be called the 'auto-directing', by which a character's speech effectively tells the performer playing this role what to do:

BOTTOM. now will I to the chink,
to spy and I can hear my Thisbe's face. (v. 1. 187–88)

BOTTOM. Out sword, and wound
The pap of Pyramus. (v. 1. 280–81)

FLUTE. Come blade, my breast imbrue. (v. 1. 326)

In *A Midsummer Night's Dream* itself, such overt direction is again associated with the junior fairies, whose movement and physical action are carefully guided by the senior characters. Titania's initial calling on (III. 1. 136) is followed by the instruction, 'Be kind and courteous to this gentleman' (III. 1. 142) and shortly afterwards is emphasized by the more specific: 'Nod to him, elves, and do him courtesies' (III. 1. 152). On their next appearance it is Bottom who does the directing of the individual performers:

²⁸ George Cavendish, *The Life and Death of Cardinal Wolsey*, ed. by Richard S. Sylvester, Early English Text Society, OS, 243 (London: Oxford University Press, 1959), p. 23. The 'a room' of the Broadway mummers' play is a later rationalization after the imperative way-clearing sense of 'room' has been lost.

BOTTOM. Where's Peaseblossom?
 PEASEBLOSSOM. Ready.
 BOTTOM. Scratch my head, Pleaseblossom. (IV. 1. 5–7)

Cobweb and Mustardseed are dealt with accordingly (IV. 1. 8–22).

While *A Midsummer Night's Dream* also has moments when it seems as if one character is directing another, the difference seems to be that these are often 'false' directions, where *characters* are instructed (or prompted) to do (or say) something, but the *performer* concerned is not meant to comply. Thus while Theseus's 'What's the news with thee?' (I. 1. 21) is indeed a cue for Egeus to give his news, a few lines later the player in the role of Hermia is *not* meant to respond immediately to Theseus's 'What say you, Hermia?' (I. 1. 46). Similarly while Puck is evidently intended to obey Oberon's 'Stand aside' (III. 2. 116) immediately, he has to wait twenty lines after Oberon's first instruction, 'take this transformed scalp | From off the head of this Athenian swain [i.e. Bottom]' (IV. 1. 61–62) before complying (at IV. 1. 81). Speech and action in the mechanicals' scenes which do not rehearse or perform 'Pyramus and Thisbe' partake of the dramaturgical mode of the host play as a whole. This includes reverse direction from Bottom in a characteristic topsy-turvy exclamation which has not been fully understood in commentaries. When he says to his fellows, 'Masters, spread yourselves' (I. 2. 12–13), he probably waves his arms in a gesture signalling them to gather around him, which is what the situation actually requires.²⁹

Getting Off

One of the unappreciated skills of dramatic art is that of getting performers off stage. In performance traditions where there is no raised stage this should be reformulated as getting them out of the acting area, and the less sharply the latter is defined the less problematic it is for characters to drift away from the centre of attention, to effectively 'fade out'. Interludes do not need the awkward excuses to get off the sharply defined pageant-scaffold encountered in the mystery cycles, like the sudden and apocryphal decision of the N-town Doctors to follow the Christ child out of the Temple 'Of 3ow to haue more informacyon'.³⁰ 'Pyramus and

²⁹ Foakes's Cambridge edition note to I. 2. 13 acknowledges that this is an 'internal stage direction', but takes it literally.

³⁰ *The N-Town Play: Cotton MS Vespasian D.8*, ed. by Stephen Spector, 2 vols, Early English Text Society, SS, 11 and 12 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 206, line 282.

Thisbe' has of course presented itself with a stage-management challenge in the garden-scene by deploying a wall which will need to be removed before the forest-scene, but since, played by a man, the wall could walk on, he could equally effectively walk off, and with illusion comprehensively dismantled, etiquette might demand that the wall, on behalf of the man playing it, take polite leave of the audience:

Thus have I, Wall, my part discharged so;
And being done, thus Wall away doth go. (v. 1. 199–200)

This also qualifies as a self-direction to the performer to leave the stage, as do the leave-takings of characters in the Tudor interlude of *Youth*:

CHARITY. Farewell, my masters everyone
I will come again anon
And tell you how I have done. (lines 196–98)³¹

Signalling to actors when they were to leave the stage was also a problem for the Elizabethan theatre. A backstage prompter could nudge players when to go 'on' but he could not beckon them 'off'. Any *exit* or *exeunt* in the book of the play, unless it came immediately after one of his own speeches, is not likely to have figured in the part-roll issued to a given player. There was therefore a tendency for exits to be signalled in the dialogue (but within the dramatic fiction), and about a third of the scenes in an Elizabethan stage-play tend to deploy a variant of a 'come, let us go and . . .' formula, spoken by the senior character on stage, which ensured the clearing of the stage of almost everyone except a huddle of conspirators or a troubled Danish prince who still has something to say.

The device is deployed in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (e.g. I. 1. 114–24; IV. 1. 96, 183; IV. 2. 34; V. 1. 346), and on one occasion Puck even comes close to the mode of 'Pyramus and Thisbe' in telling himself he is leaving: 'I must now to Oberon' (II. 2. 89). However the play is more (and perhaps exceptionally) characterized by *misleading* exit signals: Many of the false directions embedded in the script discussed earlier involve getting off stage. Thus Theseus's emphatic (and highly formulaic) 'Demetrius, come, | And come, Egeus. You shall go with me' (I. 2. 114–15) is a dozen lines away from their eventual movement. Titania's direction: 'Fairies, skip hence' (II. 1. 61), when she first encounters Oberon, is not meant to be followed until repeated, 'Fairies away', eighty lines later (II. 1. 144). Similarly about eighty lines pass before Lysander's challenge to Demetrius,

³¹ *Two Tudor Interludes*, ed. by Lancashire.

‘withdraw, and prove it too’ (III. 2. 254), is matched by action (III. 2. 338). Helena, despite Demetrius’s ‘Hence, get thee gone’ (II. 1. 194), will not leave until he himself exits some fifty lines later. It would not be incompatible with Shakespeare’s often playful dramaturgy for the ‘false’ scripted directions just discussed to be inserted deliberately to test, or demonstrate, his company’s skills.

As under several earlier headings, the smaller fairies are an exception: any instruction to *them* to leave is clearly functional. In their first scene Titania signals clearly and carefully when and how they are to leave (with Bottom):

TITANIA. Come, wait upon him. Lead him to my bower.
[...] bring him silently. (III. 1. 174; 178)

In their second scene she makes her instruction quite clear by saying it twice: ‘Fairies be gone, and be all ways away’ (III. 2. 38). It is hard to fathom the implications of these moments in which the host play (in a manner otherwise associated with ‘Pyramus and Thisbe’) seems deliberately to draw attention to its dramaturgical machinery. Shakespeare may be responding to necessity, say the augmentation of the acting company with untrained boys for a play which has no less than four substantial female roles (not counting Thisbe), alongside any number of (presumably smallish) elves and fairies in the trains of Titania and Oberon (which twice appear on stage together). Or in making a virtual revels interlude of this stage-play, Shakespeare may have deliberately created the impression of having to allow for untrained actors.

Getting it Across

The Presentation

‘Pyramus and Thisbe’ begins with the attention-seeking and explicatory devices which are essential in a non-theatrical performance context, where people who are already present for some other purpose (like celebrating a wedding) have to be converted into an audience, and the space they are occupying redistributed and redefined as performance and spectator areas respectively. Concomitantly a group of people who may be known to the audience in their everyday functions have now to be reidentified as characters belonging to a play world. Quince and company duly achieve all this in the customary manner of late medieval household theatre by deploying a fully fledged presentation, of which Quince’s notoriously mispunctuated prologue, ‘All for your delight we are not here’ (v. 1. 108–17) is only a part. He first makes an entry to a *Flourish of trumpets* (v. 1. 107sd), itself

heralded by the Master of the Revels: 'So please your grace, the prologue is addressed' (v. 1. 106). He ends with the announcement that 'The actors are at hand' (v. 1. 116). The prologue (which, if spoken as written, would have served its purpose well enough) leads into what is evidently a pretty spectacular mass-entry by the whole company, in costume, and (at least in the Folio text) led by a trumpeter (v. 1. 125sd). The latter device remains viable in the essentially analogous context of the traditional mummers' plays, as in the *Tipteerers' Play* from Iping, Sussex:

Leader (Doctor) carries a cow's horn on which he announces the approach of the Tipteerers. They file into the room and form into a ring.³²

Something of this character could be enough to qualify as the 'show' at which Quince feels the audience may 'wonder' (v. 1. 126). The suggestion is sometimes made that the characters perform a dumbshow or tableau immediately after their entrance.³³ But this seems to have no more historical precedent than the idiosyncratic and problematic dumbshow preceding the play-within-the-play in *Hamlet*.

In his role of Presenter, Quince now launches into a substantial piece of explanation — an introduction to the performers and the characters they represent, modulating into a narrative of the plot of the entire interlude. The beginning is a fairly straightforward listing of characters,

This man is Pyramus, if you would know;
This beauteous lady Thisbe is, certain. (v. 1. 128–29)

Referring to Flute as a 'lady' even before specifying the name makes it clear he is introducing characters, not performers. But on turning to the first of the non-human figures there appears a distinction between the performer, 'This man', and the figure, 'Wall', which he 'doth present'. This is linked by the costuming/properties ('lime and rough-cast') by which the one becomes the other. Come the performance (v. 1. 163), the distinction is perceived by Theseus in attributing to the 'character' qualities belonging to the performer: 'Would you desire lime and hair to speak better?' The introduction of this third figure, who impinges on the relationship of the first two, provokes elaboration with plot-summary:

that vile wall which did these lovers sunder;
And through Wall's chink, poor souls, they are content
To whisper. (v. 1. 131–33)

³² Helm, *The English Mummers and their Plays*, p. 80.

³³ Foakes, note to v. 1. 116, 126, citing Wells.

The introduction of Moonshine, ‘This man with lanthorn, dog, and bush of thorn’ (v. 1. 134) takes the story a step further — ‘By moonshine did these lover think no scorn | To meet at Ninus’ tomb’ (v. 1. 136–37), while with the last character, Lion, narrative becomes the dominant mode:

This grisly beast, which Lion hight by name,
The trusty Thisbe, coming first by night,
Did scare away, or rather did affright;
And, as she fled, her mantle she did fall,
Which Lion vile with bloody mouth did stain.
Anon comes Pyramus, sweet youth and tall,
And finds his trusty Thisbe’s mantle slain;
Whereat with blade, with bloody, blameful, blade,
He bravely broached his boiling bloody breast;
And Thisbe, tarrying in mulberry shade;
His dagger drew, and died. (v. 1. 138–48)

Here indeed it is difficult not to feel the players might mime or act out some of the action thus summarized by Quince.³⁴ But there is little or no medieval evidence for such a procedure: indeed in combining a single speaker with actors who merely mime the action, this would qualify rather as a pseudo-*Athenian* feature, for it corresponds, not to a conventional Elizabethan dumbshow, but to the late medieval misconception of the performance of the plays of Terence in Roman theatres.³⁵

The introduction and description of the individual performers remain characteristics of traditional ‘folk’ drama. In one of the earliest English records, describing a performance at Keighley, Yorkshire, around the middle of the eighteenth-century:

The amusements of the evening were prefaced with a song, of perhaps thirty stanzas, by way of prologue; [...] The purport of the composition was to announce the performers, who came on one after another, following the Clown in a circle, till the whole, *with their characters and abilities*, were pointed out to the audience.³⁶

As an alternative to a dumbshow it might be imagined that some more formal, ceremonial action accompanied Quince’s presentation of his company, if perhaps

³⁴ Holland in his edition of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, note to v. 1. 116, assumes that Quince’s ‘show’ refers to ‘the dumb show that accompanies the second part of the prologue’, referring specifically to these lines.

³⁵ William Tydeman, *The Theatre in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), pp. 48–49.

³⁶ John Jackson, *The History of the Scottish Stage* (Edinburgh: Hill and Robinson, 1793), pp. 410–11 (emphasis added).

not quite as elaborate as in the traditional Sword Dance show perambulated in the neighbourhood of Kirkby Malzeard, Yorkshire, in the late nineteenth century. Here, the dancers formed a line at right angles to the audience as the Presenter began:

The first two stanzas are addressed to the audience. At the third stanza the Captain walks up to [dancer] No. 1, and traces a scroll on the ground at his feet with the point of his sword. No. 1 then leaves the ranks and walks leisurely round in an oval track in front of the other dancers, [...] dragging his sword on the ground [and so with each of the others] [...] so that on the conclusion of the eighth stanza the six dancers are marching, one behind the other, round the track.³⁷

Meanwhile a late medieval antecedent for the Presenter's narrative plot-summary is to be found in the opening of the early sixteenth-century Danish carnival interlude, *Den Utro Hustru* (The Unfaithful Wife) (lines 13–36):

For the company that is in here,
if it wishes to hear them,
[The actors] will contrive a little play;
That they will do soon.
Then you will see a fair rose,
Who will be approached by many wooers,
For she is a good one to lie with,
I've known that well for a long time.
First comes a peasant [...].³⁸

Is it possible that *A Midsummer Night's Dream* opened in the playhouse with a prologue that has not survived in association with either of the printed texts? As a performance feature the prologue was required to be flexible, adjusted to various circumstances (playhouse, court, college, great house, guildhall), and so often written on a separate sheet not incorporated into or printed with the book of the play.³⁹ But to judge from surviving Shakespearean examples the prologue is likely to have been all that there was by way of presentation: with an audience gathered specifically to see a play in a purpose-built venue there was no need for anything more

³⁷ Cecil J. Sharp, *The Sword Dances of Northern England*, 2 vols (1911–13; repr. bound as one vol. London: English Folk Dance and Song Society, 1985), I, 42–44.

³⁸ Translation by Tom Pettitt and Leif Søndergaard, from a collection of translations of early Scandinavian plays and interludes currently in preparation. We have published a rather more jaunty English acting version in our 'The Unfaithful Wife (*Den Utro Hustru*)', *Medieval English Theatre*, 21 (2000 for 1999), 111–34.

³⁹ See the well-argued and convincingly documented discussion in Stern, *Making Shakespeare*, pp. 118–21.

elaborate. On provincial tours the presentation of the household interludes was effectively replaced by the parading of the actors into town. Beyond deferentially announcing the subject and themes of the play some Shakespearean prologues narrate the story thus far (*Troilus and Cressida*; *2 Henry IV*; *Pericles*). Others, if briefly, summarize the plot to the end (*Romeo and Juliet*). What Shakespeare's playhouse prologues do not do, it seems, is threaten the integrity of the dramatic illusion by presenting the performers to the audience, albeit in costume, outside the encompassing folds of the play proper. They do not distinguish categorically between performer and character. The latter procedure is endemic rather to the presentational mode of the interludes, masques, and mummers' plays of household theatre, medieval and traditional, where the prologue is indeed — or a prologue is a part of — a Presentation.⁴⁰

In a manner that strikingly accords with Anne Righter's thesis on the substitution of overt dramaturgical machinery by metadramatic features, Shakespeare inserts a virtual Presentation close to the beginning of the play proper, when Egeus intrudes on the court of Theseus at the head of a group of visitors. Rather like a traditional Presenter, he greets the householder, 'Happy be Theseus, our renowned Duke!' (I. 1. 20), then proceeds to 'call on' and introduce his performers:

Stand forth, Demetrius! My noble lord,
This man hath my consent to marry her.
Stand forth Lysander! And, my gracious Duke,
This man hath bewitched the bosom of my child. (I. 1. 24–27)

Explication

A further dramaturgical feature shared by 'Pyramus and Thisbe', medieval interludes, and mummers' plays is the tendency of characters to present themselves to the audience and explain their function, usually on their first appearance.⁴¹ Snout introduces himself as both performer and character/scenic property:

In this same interlude it doth befall
That I, one Snout by name, present a wall;

⁴⁰ For a comprehensive and methodologically far more sophisticated treatment of Shakespeare's prologues in the context of late medieval and Elizabethan traditions, see Douglas Bruster and Robert Weimann, *Prologues to Shakespeare's Theatre: Performance and Liminality in Early Modern Drama* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

⁴¹ On audience awareness in Tudor interludes more generally, see Righter, *Shakespeare and the Idea of the Play*, pp. 31–40.

And such a wall as I would have you think
That had in it a crannied hole or chink. (v. 1. 153–56)

Snug, as Lion (v. 1. 211–18), and as previously planned, does the same ('I as Snug the joiner am | A lion fell'), but Starveling as Moonshine is reduced by audience interruptions to an exasperated summary: 'All I have to say is to tell you that the lanthorn is the moon, I the man i' th' moon, this thorn bush my thorn bush, and this dog my dog' (v. 1. 242–45). In the Tudor interlude *Youth*, the central figure merely introduces himself as a character,

I am a goodly of person;
I am peerless wherever I come.
My name is Youth, I tell thee.
I flourish as the vine tree. (lines 42–45)⁴²

At corresponding points in the traditional mummers' plays the self-introductions of characters are generally accompanied, as in 'Pyramus and Thisbe', by explication of their role in the ensuing plot:

The Noble Captain comes forward and walks up and down saying
In comes I, the Noble Captain,
just lately come from France,
With my broadsword and jolly Turk
I'll make King George to dance.
And I had him here, I wonder what would appear?
I'd cut him up as small as mint dust
And send him to Old Father Christmas
to make a pie crust.⁴³

Characters in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* itself also need to identify themselves, but in this more representational dramaturgical environment, the explication is made, with greater or lesser plausibility, in dialogue with another character, rather than by direct address to the audience:

FAIRY. Either I mistake your shape and making quite,
Or else you are that shrewd and knavish sprite
Called Robin Goodfellow. [...]
Those that 'Hobgoblin' call you, and 'Sweet Puck',
You do their work, and they shall have good luck.
Are not you he?

⁴² *Two Tudor Interludes*, ed. by Lancashire.

⁴³ Helm, *The English Mummers and their Plays*, pp. 80–82, Tipteerers' Play from Iping, Sussex, lines 34–39.

PUCK. I am that merry wanderer of the night.
I jest to Oberon, and make him smile. (II. 1. 32–44)

Narrative

As already seen, the presentation of ‘Pyramus and Thisbe’ is characterized by a substantial narrative element, effectively supplying the audience with the full plot of the interlude, and in the course of the performance there are moments, prompted by audience intervention, where this is supplemented by Bottom’s explicatory narrative:

Thisbe [...] is to enter now, and I am to spy her through the wall. (v. 1. 180–81)
the wall is down that parted their neighbours. (v. 1. 332)

This seems to represent the remains of the interlude tradition in which a character spoke out of the dramatic world and directly to the audience, to explicate what was happening:

CHARITY. Lo, masters, here you may see befor
That the weed overgreweth the corn.
Now ye may see all in this tide
How vice is taken, and virtue set aside. (*Youth*, lines 547–50)

More in line with playhouse convention, narrative and explication in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, while largely for the benefit of the audience, are addressed by one character to another within the play world, like Egeus’s pseudo-presentation of his daughter’s wooers.⁴⁴ Puck explains at some length to a fairy the conflict between Oberon and Titania over the ‘lovely boy stol’n from an Indian king’ (II. 1. 22), while in a celebrated account Oberon recounts to Puck how the flower ‘love in idleness’ acquired from Cupid’s arrow the power to provoke love (II. 1. 148–72).

Taking Leave

At the end of a stage-play the epilogue provided an absolutely last chance for any narration or explication to stitch up remaining holes in the audience’s understanding and appreciation. The Gower-figure who has functioned as prologue and

⁴⁴ Righter, *Shakespeare and the Idea of the Play*, pp. 55–57, discusses the way exposition ‘could [...] be handled in a more subtle, self-contained fashion’ in the fully fledged Elizabethan theatre.

chorus all through *Pericles* returns for an epilogue which devotes only its two last lines to announcing the end of the play, the remainder explicating what has been dramatized ('In Helicanus may you well descry | A figure of truth, of faith, of loyalty', 18. 7–8) and narrating what there was not room for:

For wicked Cleon and his wife, when fame
Had spread their cursèd deed to th' honoured name
Of Pericles, to rage the city turn,
That him and his they in his palace burn. (18. 11–14)

Some of the Shakespearean epilogues that survive are indeed spoken by a neutral, functional figure, endeavouring to humbly beg, ingratiatingly cajole, or wittily provoke the good will of spectators on behalf of a 'we' which presumably encompasses the acting company and the theatre management (e.g. *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, *All is True*, *All's Well that Ends Well*, *2 Henry IV*). But others resemble his prologues in their reluctance to destroy dramatic illusion by allowing the performer to step out fully from behind the character. *The Tempest*, in a celebrated exploitation of the convention, has the epilogue spoken by a Prospero who achieves its extra-dramatic purposes while staying emphatically within the play world to the end. He asks for applause as a means of generating the wind he needs to sail home to Naples.

In this company the epilogue of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* has a distinctly experimental feel to it. Its content is what convention might lead us to expect from an actor on behalf of his company, hoping that 'we shadows' have not 'offended' (v. 1. 401). In addition there is the promise that if the play failed to please 'We will make amends ere long' (v. 1. 412), and taking leave with the request for applause: 'Give me your hands' (v. 1. 415). But this is all spoken by a figure who emphatically remains in character: 'as I am an honest Puck'; 'Robin will restore amends' (v. 1. 409; 416 — the last line). It is of course skilfully compatible with this ambiguity that he invites the audience to see their time in the theatre as sharing an experience with the characters:

Think but this, [. . .]
That you have but slumbered here
While these visions did appear;
And this weak and idle theme
No more yielding but a dream. (v. 1. 402–06)

This is a piece of explication which is not just the end of the play, but the beginning of interpretative responses to it.

There is an intriguingly analogous ambiguity, from a different perspective, in the epilogue which — as it turns out — does *not* conclude the performance of

'Pyramus and Thisbe'. Since a formal, independent epilogue is not a regular feature of late medieval and Tudor interludes, in offering one to Theseus as an alternative to the Bergomask dance eventually performed at the end of 'Pyramus and Thisbe' (V. 1. 333–34) Bottom is technically offering a choice between endings appropriate for, respectively, a playhouse and household revels. Assuming of course Bottom really means 'epilogue': Theseus clearly takes it to mean the conventional speech apologizing for any shortcomings in the play just performed ('No epilogue, I pray you; for your play needs no excuse', V. 1. 335). But the Athenian mechanicals have a problem with loanwords, and in offering it as a somehow equivalent alternative to 'a Bergomask dance between two of our company', Bottom might be thinking of something as different from an epilogue as a paramour from a paragon (III. 1. 25). Perhaps this could be the ballad which he intended to have Quince write, narrating his 'dream' of a night with Titania, and which he thought he might sing at the end of a play following the death of Thisbe (IV. 1. 207–11). Perhaps it is not surprising that Theseus chooses the Bergomask dance: an 'epilogue' at the end of a play which is really an *epitome* of the play within which it was staged would have involved a circulation of materials going beyond the metadramaturgical playfulness of even a Shakespeare.

‘ANCIENT [AND MODERN] GOWER’: PRESENTING SHAKESPEARE’S *PERICLES*

Christine Dymkowski

Gower Then

The Latin ‘periculum’ may have influenced the name of the eponymous hero of *Pericles*,¹ and aptly so, for consideration of the play is fraught with as many dangers, difficulties, and contradictions as its story is for the protagonists. Disagreement still persists about the play’s authorship, and even though the latest scholarly consensus concludes that it was the work of Shakespeare and George Wilkins,² accepting the case for Wilkins as joint author raises questions as to how far certain aspects of the play should be considered in the context of Shakespeare’s other work. Compounding such questions is the poor state of the only text of the play, the 1609 Quarto, which has prompted centuries of editorial and theatrical conjecture and revision.³

¹ The gloss on the ‘List of Roles’ in *Pericles*, ed. by Suzanne Gossett, The Arden Shakespeare, 3rd edn (London: Thomson, 2004), p. 168 n. 2, cites this suggestion by the previous Arden editor, F. David Hoeniger. All quotations from the play are from Gossett’s edition.

² See *Pericles*, ed. by Gossett, pp. 62–70. For the minority view that Shakespeare was the sole author, see ‘Introduction’, in *Pericles*, ed. by Doreen DelVecchio and Antony Hammond, The New Cambridge Shakespeare (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 8–15.

³ See *Pericles*, ed. by Gossett, pp. 10–54, for discussion of textual problems and history. My examination of promptbooks at the Shakespeare Centre Library (hereafter SCL), subsidized by a grant from the University of London Central Research Fund, shows how often directors have revised the published texts on which their productions have been based — for example, Terry Hands’s 1969 and Ron Daniels’s 1979 productions interpolated other material.

Fortunately, it is beyond the scope of this essay to deal with such questions, let alone attempt to settle them. My concern is with the use of Gower to present the tale. In examining this aspect of the play, I shall, as my title indicates, refer to its author as 'Shakespeare', not because I reject the evidence of collaboration, but because *Pericles*, despite the corruption of its text and the perceived unevenness of its writing, has its own integrity: it can be read coherently, for example, as a psychological expression of the fear of female sexuality or as a historically grounded criticism of James I.⁴ Moreover, it shares many of the themes, qualities, and characteristics of Shakespeare's other late works: a story of devastating loss and wondrous restoration, a preoccupation with fathers and daughters, a miracle of divine intervention, a ranging through wide gaps of time and space, an emphasis on metatheatricality, a sense of archetypal experience. And running through it all is Gower, whose eight appearances introduce, narrate, comment on, and close the play.

Although some critics comment on the old-fashionedness of the device,⁵ Suzanne Gossett, editor of the third Arden edition, asserts a 'vogue for choruses' during the first decade of the seventeenth century, which may have been encouraged by the success of Barnabe Barnes's *The Devil's Charter*, in which the author of its Italian source appeared as chorus.⁶ *Pericles* too, in having Gower narrate the tale, brings on the author of one of the play's sources, the *Confessio*

⁴ See, for example, Janet Adelman, *Suffocating Mothers: Fantasies of Maternal Origin in Shakespeare's Plays, 'Hamlet' to 'The Tempest'* (New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 193–98, and Stuart M. Kurland, "The care . . . of subjects' good": *Pericles*, James I, and the Neglect of Government', *Comparative Drama*, 30 (1996), 220–44.

⁵ E.g. Howard Felperin, 'Shakespeare's Miracle Play', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 18 (1967), 363–74 (p. 365); Richard Paul Knowles, "'Wishes Fall out As They're Will'd": Artist, Audience, and *Pericles's* Gower', *English Studies in Canada*, 9 (1983), 14–24 (p. 15); and Stephen J. Lynch, *Shakespearean Intertextuality: Studies in Selected Sources and Plays* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1998), p. 61. Greenwood eBooks <<http://ebooks.greenwood.com/reader.jsp?x=20004F31&p=61>> [accessed 25 April 2005].

⁶ See pp. 76–78; quotation from p. 77 n. 1. A. R. Braunmuller, 'The Arts of the Dramatist', in *The Cambridge Companion to English Renaissance Drama*, ed. by A. R. Braunmuller and Michael Hattaway (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 53–90 (p. 81), comments that 'In the late 1580s and 1590s, playwrights increasingly employ narrative, "framing", or "distancing" devices: prologues and epilogues, inductions, dumbshows, choruses, presenter or commentator figures, and frame narratives', often for 'quite prosaic craftsmanly purposes', such as condensing action and describing what would be difficult to stage; he goes on to suggest that, from about 1600, the revival of children's companies and indoor playhouses and the self-consciousness of court performance encouraged playwrights to 'begin to construct plays that openly and complexly represent themselves as things performed' (pp. 83–84). In other words, what had been an old-fashioned device could find new life as a self-consciously metatheatrical strategy.

Amantis, 'the only instance in all thirty-seven plays in which Shakespeare so flaunts his literary indebtedness'.⁷ Foregrounding his source in this way also emphasizes that the 'enacted play emerges from an old story', something 'Never before and never again' done by Shakespeare.⁸ Clearly, the presence of Gower is significant: not only does he emphasize the story *as* story, but he also emphasizes its provenance. As Walter Eggers points out, 'An authorial presenter is a more radically presentational device [than an anonymous one]: he provides the audience not only a framework but, through his character as an author, a special perspective on the play proper'.⁹

To investigate what that perspective might be, it is best to begin with a consideration of what the figure of John Gower might have meant to the play's original audiences. As Neil Gilroy-Scott remarks, Gower, together with Chaucer, was regarded as one of 'the two fathers of English literature',¹⁰ whose major works comprise *Mirour de l'omme* (in French), *Vox Clamantis* (in Latin), and, most significantly for this essay, *Confessio Amantis* (in English). Richard Helgersson has recently written about the way the sixteenth century 'spen[t] much energy thinking and writing about the need for a national literature',¹¹ and Richard Terry summarizes the Elizabethan canon as 'mainly a late Medieval one, consisting of Chaucer, Gower, Skelton, and Lydgate'.¹² Elizabethan literary historians, such as

⁷ Lynch, *Shakespearean Intertextuality*, p. 61.

⁸ Michael O'Connell, 'The Experiment of Romance', in *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespearean Comedy*, ed. by Alexander Leggatt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 215–29 (p. 221).

⁹ Walter F. Eggers, Jr, 'Shakespeare's Gower and the Role of the Authorial Presenter', *Philological Quarterly*, 54 (1975), 434–43 (p. 434). Eggers adds that 'If the single function of these presenters were to expedite the narrative, there would be little reason for their sometimes vivid characterization. The more familiar figure of the nameless chorus can perform a narrator's function less obtrusively' (p. 436).

¹⁰ Neil Gilroy-Scott, 'John Gower's Reputation: Literary Allusions from the Early Fifteenth Century to the Time of "Pericles"', *Yearbook of English Studies*, 1 (1971), 30–47 (p. 30). Siân Echard, 'House Arrest: Modern Archives, Medieval Manuscripts', *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 30 (2000), 185–210 (p. 187), also notes that 'In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, Gower was persistently linked with Chaucer as the co-founder of the English poetic tradition, and Gower and Chaucer were both explicitly exempted from Henry VIII's 1542 ban on the printing of forbidden books'.

¹¹ 'Before National Literary History', *Modern Language Quarterly*, 64 (2003), 169–79 (p. 169).

¹² 'Literature, Aesthetics, and Canonicity in the Eighteenth Century', *Eighteenth-Century Life*, 21 (1997), 80–101 (p. 94).

William Webbe in *A Discourse of English Poesie* (1586), christened Gower ‘the first of our English poets’, as Herbert Grabes notes in his recent examination of the construction of the English literary canon.¹³

However, judging the literary merits of early English poets was not necessarily an informed business. Webbe himself seems to have been conversant with the reputation of his authors rather than familiar with their work:

deficiency of information and confusion of view are wofully [*sic*] evident in [*A Discourse of English Poetrie*]. Gower is the first English poet that [Webbe] has heard of; though he admits that Chaucer may have been equal in time. But it does not seem that he had read anything of Gower’s, though that poet was easily accessible in print. He admires Chaucer, but in a rather suspiciously general way.¹⁴

Apparently, Webbe was by no means alone in this regard. Helen Cooper, examining the inclusion of Gower in *Pericles* and other works, notes that ‘Gower’s name had remained one to cite [...] since early in the fifteenth century’, and that ‘the decades from the 1590s down to 1640 [...] turned his name into one not just to cite but to conjure with, for audiences both courtly and urban’: as well as *Pericles*, Gower figured in Robert Greene’s pamphlet *Greenes Vision* (1592), Ben Jonson’s masque *The Golden Age Restor’d* (1615), and John Webster’s pageant *Monuments of Honour* (1624).¹⁵ Despite this fame, however, by the time Shakespeare wrote *Pericles*, ‘Gower was not so familiar a resource [...] as to make knowledge of his works commonplace’ even though the *Confessio* had been printed in 1483, 1532, and 1554.¹⁶

¹³ ‘Canon Marking and Cultural Memory: The Creation of “English Literature” through the Writing of Literary Histories’, *Journal for the Study of British Cultures*, 10 (2003), 11–25 (p. 17); Webbe, however, called Chaucer ‘the God of English poets’.

¹⁴ *The Cambridge History of English and American Literature*, ed. by A. W. Ward and others, 18 vols (New York: G. P. Putnam, 1907–21), III: *Renascence and Reformation*, ed. by A. W. Ward and A. R. Waller, p. 17. New York: Bartleby.com, 2000. <<http://www.bartleby.com/cambridge/>> [accessed 29 April 2005].

¹⁵ Helen Cooper, “‘This worthy old writer’: *Pericles* and other Gowers, 1592–1640”, in *A Companion to Gower*, ed. by Siân Echard (Cambridge: Brewer, 2004), pp. 99–113 (p. 99). See also Cooper, pp. 99–101, who notes that Jonson’s masque also included Chaucer, Lydgate, and Spenser, and Webster’s pageant, Chaucer, Lydgate, More, and Sidney.

¹⁶ Cooper, “‘This worthy old writer’”, pp. 106, 99. While Richard Hillman avers that Gower was not only ‘greatly admired’ but also ‘widely read’ (‘Shakespeare’s Gower and Gower’s Shakespeare: The Larger Debt of *Pericles*’, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 36 (1985), 427–37 (p. 427)), Derek Pearsall makes clear that, although there was ‘something of a Gower renaissance in the latter half of the fifteenth and the first half of the sixteenth century’, during the next hundred

What associations, then, did the name of this famous poet evoke? In the prefatory epistle to his two sixteenth-century editions of the *Confessio*, the printer Berthelette 'endorsed the familiar view of him as moralist, quoting Chaucer's lines to "moral Gower". [He also, unusually,] promotes him as a continuing stylistic model for the aspiring writer'.¹⁷ *Greenes Vision* introduces Gower and Chaucer in an explicit 'debate as to the value [of] and justification for literature, whether as entertainment or as ethics',¹⁸ and Gilroy-Scott comments that 'much of [Greene's] thought' about Gower is

representative of his reputation at this period. He upholds the importance of poets to the state, their duty to employ their talents for the good of the state which is the source of their well-being, their function as repositories of knowledge and wisdom for the education of the young, and their use as a guide to individual virtue and morality.¹⁹

Cooper adds that, besides his 'reputation for being moral, and a more equivocal reputation for being a master of vernacular eloquence, [Gower] was also known as a teller of tales'.²⁰

So, members of Shakespeare's audience, even without direct knowledge of Gower's work, could be presumed to identify him as an important literary figure, as an ethical and wise man, as a patriot,²¹ and as a storyteller. With regard to the latter aspect, although 'Probably only a few members of the audience knew that [the Pericles story] forms part of Gower's own *Confessio Amantis* [...], this is unimportant, since the [opening] speech clearly reveals that he is the story's teller'.²² The same speech also makes clear that Gower's 'song', or tale, 'old was sung' (I. 0. 1): in other words, that others had told it long before Gower.

The link between Gower, the story he presents, and its earlier tellers no doubt constituted another attraction for Shakespeare's audience:

years Gower remained respected but was only occasionally read. See 'The Gower Tradition', in *Gower's Confessio Amantis: Responses and Reassessments*, ed. by A. J. Minnis (Cambridge: Brewer, 1983), pp. 179–97 (pp. 190–91).

¹⁷ Cooper, "This worthy old writer", p. 100.

¹⁸ Cooper, "This worthy old writer", p. 101.

¹⁹ Gilroy-Scott, 'John Gower's Reputation', p. 43.

²⁰ Cooper, "This worthy old writer" p. 101.

²¹ A source I can no longer identify reminds us that Shakespeare also used Gower's name for the admirable *English* soldier in *Henry V*.

²² F. David Hoeniger, 'Gower and Shakespeare in *Pericles*', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 33 (1982), 461–79 (p. 464).

the very idea of reviving the medieval poet on the stage and having him present his own ancient story was meant to appeal to an audience that had developed a liking for things old-fashioned and antiquarian. It was the time of Camden and the Society of Antiquaries.²³

Gower's antiquity would have been immediately apparent both to the eye and the ear. Hoeniger surmises that a woodcut in Wilkins's *The Painful Adventures of Pericles Prince of Tyre*, a prose version of the play published in 1608, reveals

what Gower probably looked like on stage during the play's first performance. Evidently old, with a dark and graying beard, he appeared stout and rather short, dressed in a [knee-length] plain coat, an old-fashioned cap protecting his head against raw weather, and wooden [*sic*] shoes. In one hand he held a staff, in the other a branch of laurel marking him as a renowned poet.²⁴

In addition, his first two choruses contain 'predominantly end-stopped tetrameter lines' rather than Shakespeare's usual iambic pentameter,²⁵ and he himself calls attention to this different style, questioning whether those 'born in these latter times | When wit's more ripe, [can] accept [his] rhymes' (I. 0. 11–12). So, quite apart from any specific associations conjured by his identity, the figure of Gower as presenter of the play is likely to have appealed to a general taste for antiquity in terms of character, style, and function: a medieval poet, dressed in old-fashioned clothes, speaking in old-fashioned verse forms, and fulfilling an old-fashioned role as chorus.

However, as already suggested, the chorus figure could function at once as an old-fashioned device and as a self-consciously metatheatrical tactic. Similarly, the figure of Gower himself could incorporate other binaries: he could be regarded as at once distant and familiar. As director Neil Bartlett points out in his programme notes to the play,

Gower was buried in a famous tomb in Southwark Cathedral, just a short walk down the Thames waterfront from the Globe theatre where *Pericles* was first performed. And his tomb was (and still is) topped with a well-known life-size, life-like statue. So when the long-dead Gower walks onstage to begin the evening, he was for the original audience literally a statue come to life.²⁶

²³ Hoeniger, 'Gower and Shakespeare', p. 464.

²⁴ Hoeniger, 'Gower and Shakespeare', p. 463; as Gossett notes, he also 'stands before a reading desk' (p. 168, n. 1) on which an open book is laid. Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor reproduce the image in *The Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, compact edn (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), p. 1038, which to me suggests buckled leather shoes rather than wooden ones.

²⁵ Hoeniger, 'Gower and Shakespeare', p. 464.

²⁶ Programme, *Pericles*, dir. Neil Bartlett, Lyric Hammersmith, London, 18 September – 18 October 2003, pp. 10 and 13. Bartlett connects the statue motif not only to *The Winter's Tale* but also to recurring images in *Pericles*.

That description implies yet another binary combined in Gower: the figure who speaks to the audience is at once living and dead, visibly corporeal yet denying the reality of that vision, as he explains he has '[come] From ashes [...] | Assuming man's infirmities' (I. 0. 2–3) but is not actually alive (I. 0. 15–16). For Shakespeare's audience, who shared the doctrinal certainty of eternal life, the enacted resurrection of this once-living poet could work as an implicit reminder that the unlikely restitutions Pericles enjoys in this world would in fact await them in the next.

My account so far suggests some ways to explain Gower's probable appeal and the associations he could have evoked in much of Shakespeare's audience, but from a twenty-first-century perspective, they remain rather abstract. To gain a somewhat more concrete idea of Gower's likely effect on and appeal to an early Jacobean audience, it might be useful to explore the extent to which a contemporary analogy can operate, whereby a long-deceased author introduces a modern adaptation of one of his or her works in a different medium. Shakespeare himself would appear to be the most obvious candidate to fulfil a similar function: his stature as a seminal literary figure is undoubted; his reputation for exploring timeless issues in a complex way that admits myriad interpretations implies a kind of wisdom and ethical understanding; his usefulness in providing rallying calls for 'British' values has been long-lived (and exploited for a variety of political ends); the appeal of his stories is attested by centuries of adaptation in various media. Imagine, then, for example, Andrew Davies's 2001 television adaptation of *Othello*,²⁷ wherein Othello became a modern London police commissioner, framed and interrupted by regular appearances of Shakespeare, commenting on the action and filling in its gaps in iambic pentameter verse. What kinds of thoughts and reactions might his presence provoke? Obviously, we would remain aware of the story as story: our involvement in Othello's predicament would be interrupted at regular intervals. We might think about how much has or has not changed between the time of Shakespeare's play and Davies's adaptation. We might wonder why Shakespeare himself was being used to break up the narrative, but we might not interrogate the way our personal associations with the playwright were nevertheless helping to shape our response to the programme and to understand its import; the connection with Shakespeare would probably help to raise the programme's stature as an aesthetic object and to increase its meaningfulness, particularly in regard to reading it in state-of-the-nation terms. (Those with negative associations surrounding Shakespeare would probably not be watching.) If we know rather

²⁷ *Othello*. Adapted by Andrew Davies. Dir. Geoffrey Sax. ITV television production featuring Eamonn Walker, Christopher Ecclestone, and Keeley Hawes. 2001.

than simply know of the original play, we might consider changes prompted not only by the need to update it but also by its transfer from stage to television. And if we know that Shakespeare adapted his own play from Cinthio's story in the *Hecatommithi*, we might think intertextually about these three different versions of the tale, just as a knowledgeable member of Shakespeare's audience might have thought about the Apollonius story as it appeared not only in Gower and Shakespeare but also in their various sources.

But the analogy between these two putative audiences goes only so far. My hypothetical inclusion of a presenter-Shakespeare does not play into any current cultural appreciation of the antique or into a trend in television drama of reviving old devices in a self-reflexive way. Nor does it provide any analogue for Gower's dumbshows — say, a reversion to old-fashioned black-and-white or to a silent cinema style for certain scenes — which in *Pericles* serve 'to foreground enactment, *theatre*, in relation to an ancient narrative'.²⁸ And my analogy does not begin to touch on more esoteric resonances between the medieval presenter of the play and his Jacobean audience. Cynthia Marshall, for example, explains the play's 'specific parallels with the structure of a Boethian cosmology', which 'requires dual consideration of human life from temporal and eternal perspectives':

Gower's appearances [...] separate the play into seven segments. [...] These] follow in thematic outline the popular medieval historical pattern of the Seven Ages of the World [...] which] depends on a Boethian view of time in which history is seen from the perspective of eternity. [...] Gower is uniquely conceived to serve as intermediary between these two viewpoints.²⁹

This medieval perspective was, of course, still accessible to a Renaissance audience: as Marshall points out, the Corpus Christi cycles reflected the same pattern, and evidence points to their performance 'until quite late in Elizabeth's reign'.³⁰

²⁸ O'Connell, 'Experiment of Romance', p. 221. He goes on to comment that 'The double epistemology of theatre, language *and* sight, is a deep preoccupation of Shakespeare's self-reflexive representations of his own art' and that *Pericles* juxtaposes 'dumb-shows [...] to verbal narration to suggest the uncompleted elements of theatre'.

²⁹ Cynthia Marshall, 'The Seven Ages of Pericles', *Journal of the Rocky Mountain Medieval and Renaissance Association*, 8 (1987), 147–62 (pp. 147–48).

³⁰ Marshall, 'Seven Ages of Pericles', p. 148; quotation from Peter Meredith, 'Medieval Drama in Europe: England, Scotland and Ireland; Cornwall and Wales', in *The Cambridge Guide to Theatre*, ed. by Martin Banham, rev. edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 698–700 (p. 700).

So far I have been positing an audience member who knew of Gower but had not read him. But, as usual with Shakespeare, the use of Gower is potentially much richer and more complex than so far suggested. Someone who knew the *Confessio*, for instance, is likely to have known that in it Genius tells the story of 'Appolinus the Prince of Tyr' to Amans, revealed at the end of the poem to be 'John Gower'.³¹ In other words, anticipating Barthes on the agency of the reader, the poem's author is the listener, the one who has been told the stories contained in it. Knowing this background to Gower's tale could have ramifications for the Jacobean audience: just as Gower becomes the author of the tale told to him, so the audience could become 'authors' of the play shown to them. Many commentators have mentioned Gower's inadequacy as expositor of the play's meaning, but this very inadequacy — perhaps a deliberate one — can encourage the audience to find its own response to what it has witnessed.³²

Gower in the Play

The preceding discussion raises the question of how Gower functions in the play: that is, how the character actually behaves as presenter of *Pericles*, in relation both to the characters of the play and to its audience. Richard Hillman comments that Gower's 'choric role is increasingly recognised as a functional part of the play's dramatic method, while the function itself has become the chief subject of debate, most of which concerns the issue of mediation: does the Chorus create alienation

³¹ John Gower, *Confessio Amantis, or Tales of the Seven Deadly Sins*, in *The Works of John Gower*, ed. by G. C. Macauley (Oxford, 1901), Book 8, lines 375 and 2321. Online Medieval and Classical Library, ed. by Douglas B. Killings. <<http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/OMACL/Confess/>> [accessed 10 May 2005]. Richard Hillman, *Intertextuality and Romance in Renaissance Drama: The Staging of Nostalgia* (Houndmills: Macmillan, 1992), pp. 106–23, persuasively demonstrates the relevance of the entire framework of the *Confessio Amantis* (rather than merely the tale of Appolinus) as a source for the play, by focussing on parallels between the characterization of Amans and of Pericles; he also explores the way Shakespeare's play and the framework of Gower's poem link fortune and behaviour, whereas the individual tales in the *Confessio* do not.

³² See, for example, Knowles, "'Wishes Fall out As They're Will'd'", p. 21. Critics who regard Gower's inadequacy as a deliberate strategy include Eggers, 'Shakespeare's Gower', p. 441; Kenneth J. Semon, 'Pericles: An Order beyond Reason', *Essays in Literature*, 1 (1974), 17–27 (pp. 17–20); and Stephen J. Lynch, 'The Authority of Gower in Shakespeare's *Pericles*', *Mediaevalia: A Journal of Mediaeval Studies*, 16 (1990 [1993]), 361–78. (A later version of Lynch's article appears in his *Shakespearean Intertextuality*. In it, he notes that, if Shakespeare originally played Gower, the lack of authority of this authorial figure became especially self-reflexive (pp. 63–65).)

or engagement, and exactly how?’.³³ Much of this critical debate centres on the extent to which Gower does — or does not — resemble the Chorus in *Henry V*. Does he, like his fellow chorus, call ‘attention to the audience’s role in sustaining the play imaginatively’, or does he make ‘us stand back and watch, as opposed to the Chorus in *Henry V*’?³⁴ Paradoxically, if the latter proposition is true, does Gower thereby ‘engage the audience imaginatively with the process of story telling’ rather than encourage ‘critical detachment’ from the characters, which the *Henry V* Chorus ultimately fosters?³⁵ How significant is it that, ‘While the chorus of *Henry V* emphasizes the limitations of the theater, Gower emphasizes the limitations of the chorus’?³⁶ Or is the opposite view correct, that *Henry V* interrogates the authority of the chorus, whereas Gower, as both ‘the object [. . . and] the subject of the narrative’, goes unchallenged?³⁷

For someone working within the discipline of drama and theatre, as I do, such questions can yield no definitive answers: they can be addressed only by reference to performance. Before turning to my examination of Gower in specific productions, however, it is worth noting what can be objectively said of the Gower presented in the text and how he might relate to his medieval predecessors. He speaks 307 of the play’s 2245 lines, about 13–14% of the total, although his presence is more dominating than that figure suggests. Addressing the audience directly, he speaks eight choruses, for which five entrances and four exits are marked: as only one unmarked entry follows an unmarked exit in the quarto (that between the V. 2 chorus and the epilogue), it appears that Gower was meant to enter and exit for most, if not all, of his appearances; however, the potentially contradictory stage directions allow scope to keep him on stage throughout the performance, which he both opens and closes.

Like his medieval counterparts discussed elsewhere in this volume, Gower’s choruses operate on different levels. On the simplest, he gives the audience basic information, obviating the need for it to be dramatized: he introduces characters, alerts us to changes of location and of focus, notes the passage of time, and describes events and characters. In describing the latter, Gower also offers judgements as well as statements of fact: for instance, with regard to the incestuous Antiochus and his daughter, he comments ‘Bad child, worse father’ (I. 0. 27). On

³³ Hillman, *Intertextuality*, p. 16.

³⁴ Eggers, ‘Shakespeare’s Gower’, p. 439; Knowles, “Wishes Fall out As They’re Will’d”, p. 16.

³⁵ Knowles, “Wishes Fall out As They’re Will’d”, pp. 16–17.

³⁶ Lynch, ‘Authority of Gower’, p. 360.

³⁷ Hillman, *Intertextuality*, p. 107.

two occasions (II. 0. 1–8 and the epilogue), Gower either summarizes or foretells events from a moral perspective that links characters' behaviour with what befalls them. On another, he points out a discrepancy between what a character thinks is true and what Gower and the audience know to be so (IV. 4. 46).

Despite such similarities to medieval presenters and expositors, however, Gower's role and function are ultimately different. Unlike the abstract *Contemplacio* of the N-town plays or the functionally named Expositor of the Chester cycle, for example, Gower comes to the audience complete with a personal identity, as the first section of this essay demonstrates. Furthermore, in his opening chorus, Gower himself gives the audience information about himself and his intentions: we learn that he comes from a different time; he is dead but has assumed a living shape; he wants his story to be pleasurable and restoring for the audience; he believes it has value and explicitly asks the audience to judge it for themselves (I. 0. 41–42). The relationship he posits with the audience in this first chorus is both monologic³⁸ and individualistic: using the first-person singular pronoun about himself and the second-person pronoun to address the audience directly, Gower hopes that 'to hear an old man sing' will 'glad your ear and please your eyes' (I. 1. 13, 4), assuming that the audience will passively receive his song even if they actively judge it.³⁹ His second chorus (II. 0) begins in the same vein, with Gower telling the audience what they have just seen, passing his own judgements, instructing them to 'Be quiet' (II. 0. 5), and again using the first-person pronoun three times in the space of the first sixteen lines. Once more, the presumptive theatrical model is monologic, with Gower introducing the first dumbshow by asking the seemingly rhetorical question 'what need speak I?' (II. 0. 16): the audience's eyes can tell them what they need to know. However, presumably when it has finished, he goes on to gloss what the audience have just witnessed, which would in fact be unintelligible without his explanation.

³⁸ William Fitzhenry, 'The N-Town Plays and the Politics of Metatheater', *Studies in Philology*, 100 (2003), 22–43, interestingly analyses the narrative strategies of *Contemplacio*, *Demon*, and *Death* and their relationship to monologic and dialogic models of theatre.

³⁹ Michelle M. Butler's "'All hayll, all hayll, both blithe and glad": Direct Address in Early English Drama, 1400–1585' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Duquesne University, 2003), has been invaluable in stimulating my thinking about the significance of rhetorical markers in direct address. The dissertation exhaustively analyses direct address in all extant complete plays of the period and is available as a pdf document from <<http://etd1.library.duq.edu/theses/available/etd-07032003-113751/>> [accessed 28 June 2006]. Butler discusses direct address both by special personages who present plays and by characters within them; Gower spans this divide, operating outside the *Pericles* story and yet having a persona of his own.

Henceforward, both Gower's attitude to his story and his relationship to his audience begin to change. At the end of the second chorus, he asks for the audience's indulgence, perhaps implying the effort of communicating his tale: 'What shall be next, | Pardon old Gower: this 'longs the text' (II. 0. 39–40).⁴⁰ When in the third chorus he introduces the second dumbshow, he seems now to recognize that both speech and action are necessary for comprehension: 'What's dumb in show I'll plain with speech' (III. 0. 14).⁴¹ Although he still considers himself the conduit of meaning and instructs the audience to 'Be attent' (III. 0. 11), he also begins to ask the audience to imaginatively collaborate with him: 'time that is so briefly spent | With your fine fancies quaintly eche' (III. 0. 12–13). Importantly, he soon after uses, for the first time, the first-person plural: 'Omit we all their dole and woe' (III. 0. 42). Gower goes on to use 'we' and 'our' a significant number of times,⁴² but continues to use 'I/me/my' and 'you/your' as well, suggesting he now recognizes both individual and collective identity. Subsequently, he repeatedly tells the audience to participate imaginatively in the story they are being told/shown or remarks on their doing so (III. 0. 58–60, IV. 0. 1–5, IV. 0. 47–50, IV. 4. 1–7, IV. 4. 17–18, IV. 4. 51, V. 0. 21–22, V. 2. 3–9, V. 2. 19–20). At some of these points, he explicitly acknowledges the necessity of the audience's 'imaginative engagement'⁴³ for the success of the enterprise: for example, he tells us that 'never could I so convey [the story] | Unless your thoughts went on my way' (IV. 0. 48–50).

While medieval presenters also made their audiences aware they were watching a play, Gower's metatheatrical function goes further, not only inviting audience collaboration but also making them consciously engage with the nature of theatre itself, thereby encouraging them to analyse its methods and effects by comparing them to other means of communication. For instance, towards the end of the

⁴⁰ As Gossett (*Pericles*, p. 222 n. 40) and other editors note, this 'aural ambiguity' gives the line a double meaning: Gower can be apologizing for prolonging his speech, or he could be indicating that what he says really belongs to the action. Gower similarly asks for help later in the play: 'This my last boon give me, | For such kindness must relieve me, | That you aptly will suppose' the reaction to the reunion of Pericles and Marina (V. 2. 3–5).

⁴¹ While medieval expositors are concerned to ensure the correct interpretation of a play. Gower's comment, which highlights possible discrepancies between what the audience see, how they understand it, and how he interprets it for them, actually problematizes the idea of exposition.

⁴² The first-person plural again occurs at IV. 0. 3, 6; IV. 4. 1, 3, 5, 7, 48; V. 0. 2, 11, 12, 13 (twice); V. 2. 1; Epilogue 18.

⁴³ Knowles, "Wishes Fall out As They're Will'd", p. 15.

third chorus, Gower seems to recognize that some aspects of his story cannot be adequately narrated but must be dramatized: 'I nill relate, action may | Conveniently the rest convey, | Which might not what by me is told' (III. 0. 55–57). When he introduces the third and final dumbshow, he reassures us that, although hearing and sight will not be gratified simultaneously ('Like motes and shadows see them [the characters] move awhile'), eventually 'Your ears unto your eyes I'll reconcile' (IV. 4. 21–22). As soon as we have witnessed the dumbshow, however, in which Cleon and Dionyza show Marina's supposed tomb to Pericles, Gower's gloss problematizes the nature of enactment: 'See how belief may suffer by foul show. | This borrowed passion stands for true-owed woe' (IV. 4. 23–24). The remark is of course equivocal: on the narrative level it applies to the deceitfulness of Cleon and Dionyza, whose pretended grief hides connivance at the intended murder of Marina, and on the metatheatrical level to the effectiveness of the actor playing Pericles, who according to the dumbshow stage direction departs '*in a mighty passion*' of grief. Through these ambiguous words that highlight the performative nature of what we are watching, Gower at once condemns the hypocritical emotion portrayed in the fiction and recognizes the real possibilities that drama creates for imaginative sympathy. Indeed, at V. 0. 22–24, Gower seems to say as much: 'think this [Pericles'] bark, | Where what is done in action, *more if might*, | Shall be discovered' (my italics); his lines suggest not only that enactment may reveal more than narrative, but that the audience's imagination may be able to go beyond what is enacted.

Comments such as these keep the audience mindful that they are watching the dramatization of a story and also make them conscious of the various ways — sight and sound, spoken narrative and enactment — in which that story is being conveyed; as indicated, they also implicitly invite the audience to make judgements about the comparative effects/effectiveness of these different modes. It does not appear accidental that the monologic 'song' Gower introduces in the first line of the performance has, by the final line, firmly become a dialogic 'play' (Epilogue 18), a genre that not only allows but demands the interventions occasioned by audience engagement with its processes.⁴⁴ In this regard, Shakespeare's decision

⁴⁴ Concomitantly, at the end of the play, Gower wishes us the 'New joy' attendant on our own Pericles-like 'patience' (Epilogue 17–18), a patience that we have presumably learned from our imaginative sympathy with the theatrical experience Gower presents to us. Unsurprisingly, having exercised such sympathy, many commentators reject the judgements Gower himself offers in the preceding sixteen lines: for instance, the divine justice of the punishment of 'wicked Cleon and his wife' (11) that includes the destruction of his entire household (14).

to retell Gower's own retold tale gives added meaning to the idea of dialogue between past, present, and future and between stage and audience. Unlike medieval expositors concerned to provide a moral or doctrinal lesson for their audiences, Gower, along with the audience, himself comes to realize the importance of the kind of experience theatre creates and of the kind of understanding that such an experience can engender.

Gower Now

As is evident, the specific meanings and associations attached to Gower in a Jacobean context are no longer available to the contemporary theatregoer. While he still mediates an audience's experience of the play by direct interaction and the metatheatrical issues he raises, he cannot mediate response to the play in the complex ways he seems to have been originally designed to do: most contemporary theatregoers know little, if anything, about the historical Gower, let alone his *Confessio Amantis*, and about the way medieval ideas and Renaissance tastes resonate in the play. Nor, in a largely secular society, can his resurrected presence help the audience to anticipate their own promised eternal life: unlike medieval and Renaissance theatre-goers, we no longer have the advantage of sharing 'the same spiritual reality that the play represents'.⁴⁵ How, then, can contemporary productions negotiate the challenges of making the character work for a modern audience? Can Gower now be no more than an anonymous presenter with practical and metatheatrical functions?

Before turning to the ways in which specific productions have handled the role's possibilities, it is worth noting certain aspects of the play's performance history. As editors and critics all record, *Pericles* was not only very popular for more than two decades after its debut, it was also the first Shakespeare play to be revived at the Restoration in 1660; after 1661, however, it played only in George Lillo's radical adaptation, until Samuel Phelps presented a version of Shakespeare's play in 1854.⁴⁶ Unsurprisingly, given nineteenth-century emphasis on

⁴⁵ Butler, "All hayll, all hayll, both blithe and glad", p. 109.

⁴⁶ See, for example, *Pericles*, ed. by Gossett, pp. 2–5. For a fuller stage history, see David Skeele, *Thwarting the Wayward Seas: A Critical and Theatrical History of Shakespeare's 'Pericles' in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Newark: University of Delaware Press; London: Associated University Presses, 1998), and 'Pericles in Criticism and Production: A Brief History', in *Pericles: Critical Essays*, ed. by David Skeele, *Shakespeare Criticism*, 23 (New York: Garland, 2000), pp. 1–33 (pp. 24–30).

realistic spectacle, Phelps cut Gower from the play completely: the figure was not restored until the twentieth century, and then — at least initially — only on sufferance. For example, reviewing Robert Atkins's 1939 production at the Open Air Theatre, Regent's Park, George Bishop thought D. G. Milford stood out 'as Gower, the somewhat tedious chronicler'.⁴⁷ Similarly, reviewers of Nugent Monck's 1947 Stratford revival were relieved to find that 'Dudley Jones, singing many of the lines, mitigates the torture of the Gower chorus', though others still complained that the character, 'like a baleful and supremely irritating radio narrator, manages to take the edge of surprise off every scene before we get to it'.⁴⁸

The positive potential of the part came to the fore only in the second half of the century, once naturalism had loosened its grip on theatrical expectation; the Berliner Ensemble's 1956 visit to Britain proved significant in this regard, encouraging experimentation with Brechtian *Verfremdungseffekt*.⁴⁹ By the time *Pericles* was next revived at Stratford, in Tony Richardson's 1958 production, both Gower and his storytelling were made the fulcrum of the play. Richardson, wanting 'to single this character out from the rest', decided a black actor should play the part.⁵⁰ His original choice, Paul Robeson, was unable to travel to England, as the United States continued to refuse him a passport, so British-based Trinidadian singer and actor Edric Connor took the role instead.⁵¹ In the run-up to opening night, the press made much of the fact that Connor would be 'the first Negro to appear in a Stratford Shakespeare season'.⁵²

Richardson's framing device set the action on board an ancient ship, represented by the whole stage, with Gower telling his story to the other sailors: one

⁴⁷ *Daily Telegraph*, 21 June 1939, Theatre Museum, London, production file.

⁴⁸ Respectively, *Observer*, 17 August 1947, and Philip Hope-Wallace, *Time & Tide*, 23 August 1947, in SCL Theatre Records 36 (27 April 1947–4 November 1949). The *Evesham Journal* concurred that 'The intriguing, though sometimes tedious Gower [...] has been given variety and attraction by [Jones's] beautiful singing and speech', with the *Coventry Standard* agreeing that Jones's singing 'made interesting that which tends to be tedious'. The *News Chronicle*, however, still complained that Monck had not cut enough 'of that exquisitely boring chronicler, [...] who keeps coming on to tell you in limping doggerel what you are about to see and hear for yourself' (all 23 August 1947, in SCL Theatre Records 36).

⁴⁹ See, for example, Susan Bennett, *Theatre Audiences: A Theory of Production and Reception* (London: Routledge, 1990), pp. 33–35.

⁵⁰ *Picturemail*, 9 July 1958, SCL Theatre Records 48 (1 May 1958–8 April 1959), p. 35; all reviews of the production are from this source unless otherwise noted.

⁵¹ *Daily Worker*, 27 June 1958, p. 26.

⁵² *Daily Herald*, 8 July 1958, p. 33, and others.

photo of the opening scene shows eleven seamen, six rowing downstage right and downstage left and the others further upstage hauling on ropes and rigging, with Gower standing in the centre, commanding their attention.⁵³ Loudon Sainthill designed the settings, as well as costumes that *The Times* reviewer described as 'Greek-Byzantine', while Roberto Gerhard's music was played by 'shawms, Syrian wind instruments and Pharaonic pipes made in metal from casts in Egyptian tombs'.⁵⁴ Gower was made even more prominent by Richardson's treatment of the text: the promptbook shows that Gower's second and third choruses were split up so that his interventions occurred more frequently than they do in the text.⁵⁵ In addition, Gower was sometimes on stage in between his choruses: at III. 2. 46, for example, he entered to watch the scene and remained there for III. 3. Interpolations by the sailors further highlighted his centrality: for instance, at the end of IV. 3, they ad-libbed 'Have you seen Gower, Gower, Gower', whereupon he entered from the centre-stage trap. Connor delivered his lines in a variety of ways: 'he murmurs confidentially, he declaims, he chants, he sings outright', with musical styles running the gamut from 'almost a Handelian style [... to] a modern revue calypso'.⁵⁶

As reviewers noted, Richardson's governing conceit not only gave the play a unity but also both naturalized and highlighted its storytelling aspect. T. C. Worsley was not the only critic to comment on the advantages the onstage audience provided:

as [Gower] unfolds each scene to [the group of sailors], we see it through their eyes, as it were. And so, because they are simple men with vivid and crude imaginations we are ready to accept for them the crudity of the whole conception. It is a brilliant notion and it works brilliantly.

This makes it seem right that the tale is roughly fashioned and that it is told in the most violent of primary colours — flaring reds and innocent blues, darkening purples and

⁵³ SCL, *Pericles* photo file, photo M-764-17. Another photo of Gower is posted on the RSC web site at <http://www.rsc.org.uk/searcharchives/search/data?type_id=1&field,RESOURCE_IDENTIFIER,substring,string=C_M764_19>.

⁵⁴ Respectively, *The Times*, 30 June 1958, and *Daily Telegraph*, 23 June 1958, p. 26.

⁵⁵ For example, in the text, Gower's second chorus follows I. 4; Connor delivered II. 0. 1–8 after I. 1 and II. 0. 17–39a after I. 4. As is obvious, Richardson cut lines from Gower's choruses and also omitted the IV. 4 chorus altogether.

⁵⁶ Respectively, N. T., *Leamington Spa Courier*, 11 July 1958, p. 43, and S. J., *Liverpool Daily Post*, 9 July 1958, p. 34. The promptbook shows that Gower's singing was complemented by interpolated nautical choruses of the 'Way, aye, oh!' variety, and the *Picturemail* reviewer estimated that forty-five minutes of the two-and-a-half hour playing time were given to 'song and dance'.

gleaming golds. It is a world as oversimplified in feeling as a strip cartoon. A world where the wicked are truly wicked [...] where the good are good beyond compare.⁵⁷

Reviewers noted the audience's enthusiastic reception of the production⁵⁸ and commended the tone of Connor's performance, which was 'pleasant' and genial, sincere and enthusiastic.⁵⁹ However, there were nearly universal complaints about inaudibility: several reviewers blamed the noise of the storm scene and of the music, but many of them faulted Connor himself for poor enunciation.⁶⁰

Given the production's social and political contexts — mass migration from the Caribbean during the 1950s at the invitation of the British government, recession following the 1956 Suez crisis, rising racial tension directed against black migrants culminating in the Nottingham and Notting Hill riots the month after *Pericles* opened⁶¹ — it is tempting to read reviewers' emphasis on Connor's geniality and sincerity as an attempt to contain a cultural anxiety. Similarly, strictures about his poor enunciation might betray an unconscious need to assert superiority; certainly, the reference points of some reviewers reveal explicit, even if unwitting, racism:

[Gower's] best moments are undoubtedly musical ones. He recounts his tale of *Pericles* to a rhythm that has a Sanders-of-the-river drumbeat.

[T]he suggestion of tom-toms and a tribal war-dance while the jousting is going on [reveals] precisely how a coloured Gower might imagine the event.⁶²

⁵⁷ *Financial Times*, 9 July 1958, p. 37; see also *The Times*, 30 July 1958, p. 35.

⁵⁸ See G. R. A., *Coventry Evening Telegraph*, 9 July 1958, p. 36; J. A. P., *Warwickshire Advertiser*, 11 July 1958, p. 42; Desmond Pratt, *Yorkshire Post*, 10 July 1958, p. 38.

⁵⁹ See S. D.-L., *Wolverhampton Express & Star*, 9 July 1958, p. 35; G. R. A., *Coventry Evening Telegraph*, 9 July 1958, p. 36; J. A. P., *Warwickshire Advertiser*, 11 July 1958, p. 42; R. B. M., *Stage*, 10 July 1958, p. 40; *Gloucestershire Echo*, [n.d.], p. 37; Rosemary Anne Sisson, *Stratford-upon-Avon Herald*, 11 July 1958, p. 44; and others.

⁶⁰ Six reviewers seemed to miss his words whether he was speaking or singing, while three thought the problem was confined to his singing and one to his speaking.

⁶¹ See, for example, 'Black Britain: Timeline (1950s)' and 'The Nottingham and Notting Hill Riots, 1958', in *The Shaping of Black Britain*, ed. by Dr. Ingrid Kerkhoff, Universität Bremen <<http://www.fb10.uni-bremen.de/anglistik/kerkhoff/DubPoetry/DubQuest/BlackBritainTimeline.html>> <<http://www.fb10.uni-bremen.de/anglistik/kerkhoff/DubPoetry/DubQuest/WQNottingHillRiots.html>> [accessed 17 June 2005].

⁶² Respectively, Stephen Gannon, *South Wales Argus*, 11 July 1958, p. 42, and John Wardle, *Bolton Evening News*, 11 July 1958, p. 45. Connor was not an inexperienced actor: he had formed Britain's first all-black repertory company (*Daily Herald*, 8 July 1958, p. 33) and by 1958 had

T. C. Worsley's response perhaps best illustrates how Gower's blackness worked alongside the otherwise white cast and for the white audience: asking how a director can 'persuade us to rediscover in our imaginations the ability to accept the fabulous', he praises Richardson's decision to turn Gower 'into an African storyteller from whom just by virtue of his colour we are prepared to accept marvels'; having Gower tell the story to the sailors added yet another layer that allowed the audience to 'comfortably shed three hundred years of sophistication'.⁶³ Worsley argues that this provided 'a way of getting at the true values of the play'; other critics similarly indicate that Richardson's framing device and emphasis on the exotic, be it the colour of Gower's skin, the alien musical instruments, or the vivid primary colours, allowed a 'sophisticated' audience to enjoy a 'primitive' story: several reviewers remarked that the director's treatment allowed an unworkable play to work or complained that *Pericles* was not worthy of its ingenious presentation.⁶⁴ Consequently, despite its critical success, Richardson's handling of Gower worked against what seems to be the character's original function of engaging the audience in contemplation of their own relationship both to the story he tells and to the medium he uses to convey it. Only a handful of reviewers seemed to respond to the deeply human predicament the play explores, and their comments indicate that they did so despite, rather than because of, the way Gower framed the story: 'so obstinate is the human heart that more persuasive than all this [ingenious staging] is the memory of Marina saying with infinite longing and simplicity, "Is it no more to be your daughter than to say my mother's name was Thaisa?"'.⁶⁵

already appeared in three films (<<http://www.bestoftrinidad.com/profiles/edricconnor.html>> [accessed 20 June 2005]). The initial choice of an American rather than a British-based black Gower raises the possibility of an unconscious resistance to black presence in Britain.

⁶³ *New Statesman*, 19 July 1958, p. 58.

⁶⁴ G. R. A., *Coventry Evening Telegraph*, 9 July 1958, p. 36; *The Times*, 9 July 1958, p. 35; *Coventry Standard*, 11 July 1958, p. 42; N. T., *Leamington Spa Courier*, 11 July 1958, p. 43; Worsley, *Financial Times*, 9 July 1958, p. 37.

⁶⁵ Sisson, *Stratford-upon-Avon Herald*, 11 July 1958, p. 44. Worsley also noted that in the recognition scene the 'director drops all his devices and lets it play itself out' (*Financial Times*, 9 July 1958, p. 37), while the *Daily Express*, 9 July 1958, p. 40, admired the way Richardson 'suddenly [...] cleared the stage of ropes and clutter. He quietened the din' for the 'radiant poetry' of Pericles' and Marina's reunion. R. B. M., *Stage*, 10 July 1958, p. 40, made clear that Gower and the sailors stood 'outside the development of [Pericles'] story', where 'the sweep and commanding range [...] are really outstanding and become all the more impressive because in everything, no matter how violent, weird or remote from modern civilisation, we are aware of the cry of human beings with whom it is possible to feel deeply'.

Critical response to Stratford's next Gower, Emrys James in Terry Hands's 1969 production, similarly highlights this potential tension between the play's narrative framework and the Pericles story. In his first talk to the cast, Hands explained he would use 'deliberate doubling' to highlight the play's pattern of places and characters,

Firstly by Gower calling on a group of actors to tell his story, and secondly by linking those characters that specifically relate to Pericles himself. Thus it becomes possible to double: Antiochus with Boulton, Thaliard with Leonine, Cleon with the Pandar, Gower with Helicanus, Dionysa with the Bawd, and Thaisa with Marina.⁶⁶

Consequently, Gower was on stage throughout the play, acting as both presenter of and participant in the action: 'summoned from his ashes by a chorus singing an interpolated Latin song', he 'call[ed] upon the actors to tell their tale', sometimes even directing them to 'change parts without bothering to disguise their faces'.⁶⁷

Reviewers were divided about the effects of Hands's approach. For some, like Don Chapman, James's 'magnificent performance' gave the production 'its sense of purpose' and 'really [held] the audience': as another reviewer recounted, 'When he says "Imagine!" he says it with such conviction that even the most sluggish mind in the audience must respond'.⁶⁸ B. A. Young, however, not only found Gower 'rather a bore', but also felt that the sense that 'everything [...] happening is taking place in Gower's mind' suggests the actors are not 'men and women but [...] puppets'. As Benedict Nightingale concurred, 'the approach does [...] tend to make the action impersonal, and curiously unmoving even at climaxes'.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Programme, *Pericles*, dir. Terry Hands, Shakespeare Memorial Theatre, Stratford, 8 April 1969, SCL production file.

⁶⁷ Respectively, B. A. Young, *Financial Times*, 3 April 1969, SCL Theatre Records 75 (1 February–16 May 1969), p. 75; J. C. Trewin, *Birmingham Post*, [n.d.], p. 74; and Benedict Nightingale, *New Statesman*, 11 April 1969, p. 85 (all reviews of the production are from SCL Theatre Records 75 unless otherwise noted). Production file photographs show Gower holding a staff and dressed in a long robe, with cowled neck, long pointed sleeves, and wide belt; he put his hood over his head to act as the messenger in the II. 1 dumbshow. Frank Marcus noted that the other characters wore 'leg-warmers, trunks, and tunics' that emphasized 'the body' (*Sunday Telegraph*, 6 April 1969, p. 81).

⁶⁸ Respectively, *Oxford Mail*, [3 April 1969 (?)], and W. T., *Nottingham Evening Post*, [n.d.], both p. 74. See also Harold Hobson, *Sunday Times*, [n.d.], p. 80; Hilary Spurling, *Spectator*, 11 April 1969, p. 86; and Jeremy Kingston, *Punch*, 15/16 April 1969, p. 94, for approving comments.

⁶⁹ Young, *Financial Times*, 3 April 1969, p. 75; Nightingale, *New Statesman*, 11 April 1969, p. 85.

Although some modern productions have dispensed with such problems by dispensing with Gower — Declan Donnellan's 1984 *Cheek by Jowl* touring production, for example, shared his narration amongst the cast⁷⁰ — others have succeeded in making him the play's centrepiece without sacrificing the human dimensions and emotional power of the other characters. David Thacker's 1989 RSC production, first performed at the Swan on 6 September and subsequently transferring to Newcastle and to London, again featured a Trinidadian-born, British-based black actor as Gower, but Rudolph Walker's portrayal was very different from Edric Connor's and indeed from the 'ancient Gower' (I.0.2) of the text. This Gower, dressed in a modern green corduroy suit with a polka-dot bow tie,⁷¹ was the audience's contemporary, while the other characters (who in Shakespeare's time were likely to be dressed in contemporary fashion) were an eclectic mix of 'courtiers from revolutionary France, Norwich school fisherm[e]n, medieval peasants, doctor and priestess from classical Greece'.⁷²

Walker first entered through the Swan's intimate auditorium, carrying the book that contained his story, and crossed to centre of the thrust stage to deliver his first chorus, during which characters appeared as he mentioned them.⁷³ Upon finishing his chorus, he did not exit but remained permanently on stage, sitting upstage left in a chair during the action and only moving about the stage during his choruses, which, as with the Stratford productions of 1958 and 1969, were broken up and rearranged to make Gower's interventions more frequent. After the interval, he re-entered, this time with flowers as well as the book, both of which he placed on his chair before speaking the IV.0 chorus; at IV.0.38 he retrieved the flowers, placing them on Lychorida's 'grave' three lines later. Although the promptbook records this explicit stage-setting activity, it does not record his interaction with the audience before beginning the second part of the play or the

⁷⁰ See Michael Ratcliffe, *Observer*, 20 January 1985; Robert Page, *The Times*, 15 January 1985; *Country Life*, 31 January 1985, for reviews of performances at the Donmar Warehouse, London. Production file, Theatre Museum, London.

⁷¹ Production file photograph, SCL. See also Rex Gibson, *Times Educational Supplement*, 22 September 1989, SCL Theatre Records 145–46 (1 May 1989–27 September 1989), p. 92. All reviews of the Swan performances (i.e. those with September dates) are from this source.

⁷² Gibson, *Times Educational Supplement*, 22 September 1989, p. 92; Michael Billington, *Guardian*, 14 September 1989, p. 69, similarly described a 'tattered Regency' Pericles, an 'unmistakenly Hogarthian' brothel, and a 'quasi-medieval' tournament at Pentapolis.

⁷³ Photocopy of the promptbook, production file, SCL. My descriptions are also based on my own recollections of the production: I attended the performance on 31 October 1989 and viewed the RSC archive video recording in February 2005.

laughter it provoked, which the archive video captures.⁷⁴ Nor does it record Walker's treatment of certain lines, which made the audience complicit with this Gower's frank appreciation of human sexuality and his sometimes tongue-in-cheek attitude to his own tale. For example, on 'Where by the loss of maidenhead | A babe is moulded' (III. 0. 10–11), he lingered on the last word, then added 'yeah' and chuckled, prompting audience laughter; he similarly lingered on the final word of his description of Marina as 'a full-grown lass [*sic*]' (IV. 0. 16) and followed it with a lecherous chuckle, to which the audience responded with even more laughter. At V. 0. 2, Walker delivered 'the [*sic*] story says' in tones that acknowledged the audience's likely scepticism about Marina's convenient delivery from danger, while right at the beginning of the play, at I. 0. 10, he followed his Latin tag with an enquiring 'Hmm?' and chuckled at the expected audience ignorance of its meaning.

Reviewers in Stratford, Newcastle, and London were virtually unanimous in admiring Walker's handling of the part, in terms both of vocal quality and of characterization.⁷⁵ Their enthusiastic comments make clear that, unlike other Gowers who managed to reconcile audiences to the role, Walker actually made it one of the production's most compelling and enjoyable features. Not only did he articulate 'beautifully',⁷⁶ but as reviewers, particularly of the Newcastle performances, comment, his 'lilting, rhythmic delivery was a joy to hear, enrapturing the audience'.⁷⁷ One anonymous reviewer vividly describes both Walker's voice and stage presence:

⁷⁴ Unfortunately, the archive video is faulty, so it is not possible to see Gower's actions here; I assume that they were directed at quieting the audience after the interval.

⁷⁵ There were only two dissenters: Michael Coveney was alone in finding him 'haltingly half-comprehensible' (*Financial Times*, 14 September 1989, p. 67), while Benedict Nightingale, reviewing the Barbican Pit (London) performance, complained that his seeming to present 'an episode of *This is Your Life*' hampered the audience's imaginative journey (*The Times*, 14 April 1990, SCL Theatre Records 151–52 (30 March 1990–22 July 1990), p. 36). All reviews of the London performances (i.e. those with April dates) are from this source.

⁷⁶ Billington, *Guardian*, 14 September 1989, p. 69. See also Hugo Williams, *Sunday Correspondent*, 17 September 1989, p. 77, who found him mellifluous, and Peter Hepple, *Stage*, 26 April 1990, p. 59, who called him 'nicely resonant'.

⁷⁷ Tim Williams, *South Shields Gazette*, 22 February 1990, SCL Theatre Records 149–50 (January–30 March 1990), p. 57; all reviews of the Newcastle performances (i.e. those with February dates) are from this source. See also Peter Collins, who claimed that Walker's 'resonant and richly-textured voice became the linchpin of an exciting and brilliantly executed concept' (*Sunderland Echo*, 23 February 1990, p. 59).

A cheerful West Indian man strolled onto a stage last night. He wore a green corduroy suit and carried only a book. But pushing back its first page he eased his audience far into the fantastic world of *Pericles* [...] while they hardly realised he was doing it. His lilting tone, part Devon burr, part deep South, transformed the artificial narrator's role and imbued Shakespeare's strange pastiche of fantasy, love and death with new-found fluidity and humour. [...] All ends happily and the man shuts his book. Shame. Could have listened to him all night.⁷⁸

Although critics agreed on the presenter's geniality and humour,⁷⁹ it was clear that his good nature was not bland but 'spiced with a hint of irony': he was 'alternately sardonic and soothing'.⁸⁰ This Gower's nuanced treatment of his story allowed the director to build further on the play's 'variety of [verse] styles', as Michael Schmidt remarks, moving 'from stylisation to naturalism. The more evil the characters, the more stylised the presentation. [...] Thacker] allows only those characters whose development has moral consequences to emerge fully defined, leaving the rest as moral types'.⁸¹ This refusal, by both Walker and Thacker, to apply the same tone and treatment to the whole play paid enormous dividends in terms of audience response. Unlike Hands's approach, for instance, in which all of the performances had a 'hieratic quality' that fostered emotional disengagement, this production 'perfectly balance[d] camp melodrama with raw emotion'; as a result, Gower could acknowledge 'the tale's more ludicrous elements while keeping the audience on the edge of their seats'.⁸² Nor is the final comment merely rhetorical; reviews, particularly of the Stratford performances, are unusual in stressing the production's emotional effects on its spectators: the reunion between *Pericles* and Marina was 'heart-rending', 'heart-stopping', 'astonishingly moving',

⁷⁸ *Newcastle Chronicle*, 22 February 1990, p. 57.

⁷⁹ See, for example, Michael Schmidt, *Daily Telegraph*, 15 September 1989, p. 72; Margaret Ingram, *Stratford Herald*, 15 September 1989, p. 73; Lois Potter, *Times Literary Supplement*, 22 September 1989, p. 89; Gibson, *Times Educational Supplement*, 22 September 1989, p. 92; C. S., *Weekend Telegraph*, 14 April 1990, p. 36; Stanley Slaughter, *Birmingham Post*, 19 April 1990, p. 44.

⁸⁰ Respectively, Roy Shaw, *Tablet*, 28 April 1990, p. 65, and Jim Hiley, *Listener*, 26 April 1990, p. 59; see also Michael Ratcliffe, *Observer*, 17 September 1989, p. 77, and Gibson, *Times Educational Supplement*, 22 September 1989, p. 92.

⁸¹ *Daily Telegraph*, 15 September 1989, p. 72. Potter, *Times Literary Supplement*, 22 September 1989, p. 89, agreed that 'Thacker emphasize[d the play's] fairy-tale discontinuities of tone'.

⁸² Respectively, Young, *Financial Times*, 3 April 1969, p. 75; Hiley, *Listener*, 26 April 1990, p. 59; and C. S., *Weekend Telegraph*, 14 April 1990, p. 36. This approach is, of course, true to the spirit of the play itself, which 'unites [...] a mystical belief in regeneration with a realistic awareness of cruelty and evil' (Michael Billington, *Country Life*, 21 September 1989, p. 88).

'almost unbearable', rendering 'the house spellbound' and 'induc[ing] tears.'⁸³ Potter's review admitted that Nigel Terry's delivery of Pericles' line about Thaisa's 'terrible childbed' (III. 1. 56) 'still brings tears to the eyes', while the *Mail* averred that the reconciliation scene 'will start a prickle behind the eyes of the most jaded spectator. Wondrous'.⁸⁴

The success of Thacker's production, though obviously reliant on the power of the acting, also depended on Walker's ability to mediate the play's disparate and foreign material so that contemporary audiences could relate to it.⁸⁵ Reversing Shakespeare's own scheme, in which a remote Gower nevertheless helped the audience to bridge the gap between their own and the characters' experiences, Thacker made him a contemporary figure, comfortable and familiar as he guided the audience through the play. Interestingly, in this regard, there is no evidence that Walker's blackness caused him to be perceived as an 'other', perhaps because, besides being a respected stage actor, he was also a popular television star.⁸⁶ Unlike Connor, his racial identity seems hardly to have figured in critical response to his performance: two mentions of his being 'West Indian' and 'Caribbean' are simple descriptions,⁸⁷ while two references to him as an 'Uncle Remus' figure indicate a

⁸³ Respectively, Potter, *Times Literary Supplement*, 22 September 1989, p. 89; Schmidt, *Daily Telegraph*, 15 September 1989, p. 72; *Mail*, 17 September 1989, p. 75; John Gross, *Sunday Telegraph*, 17 September 1989, p. 76; Billington, *Guardian*, 14 September 1989, p. 69; and *County Life*, 21 September 1989, p. 88. Although I do not generally record responses to plays in my diary, on this occasion I noted 'wonderful — magic!'

⁸⁴ Nor were all responses discreet 'prickles': David Ford noted that 'The girl next to [him] was visibly moved' (*Worcester Evening News*, 13 September 1989, p. 63).

⁸⁵ The significance of Walker's Gower in mediating the play is all the more apparent when one considers the extent to which he features in reviewers' comments, compared to Brian Protheroe's Gower in Adrian Noble's 2002 RSC production. Of the eighteen reviews I read, only five mention Gower and those do so in passing: he 'gabbles' (Nicholas de Jongh, *Evening Standard*, 8 July 2002); he plays it 'dead straight' (Dominic Maxwell, *What's On*, 10 July 2002); his performance is 'superb' (Lucy Powell, *Time Out*, 10 July 2002), 'capable' (Robert Hewison, *Sunday Times*, 14 July 2002), or 'authoritative' (Charles Spencer, *Daily Telegraph*, 8 July 2002); see *Theatre Record*, 22 (2002), 916–21 (pp. 917–19).

⁸⁶ See the entries on Walker on the web sites of The Black Presence in Britain <<http://www.blackpresence.co.uk/pages/entertainment/walker.htm>> and the British Film Institute <<http://www.screenonline.org.uk/people/id/499387/>> [accessed 28 June 2005].

⁸⁷ *Newcastle Chronicle*, 22 February 1990, p. 57, and Hiley, *Listener*, 26 April 1990, p. 59. Roger Warren, in *Staging Shakespeare's Late Plays* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), p. 236, makes clear that Walker used 'Caribbean-based speech rhythms' in the part, though his conclusion that they served 'to establish the "otherness" of Gower' differs from mine.

very different cultural attitude to blackness than that expressed in 1958.⁸⁸ In relating the tale of Pericles 'with as much wink to its scurrility as nod at its narrative power', Walker's 'dynamic stage presence [. . . nevertheless brought] a real sense of unity to the play'⁸⁹ — a unity derived from neither a conceptual framework nor a uniform tone imposed upon the play, but from a Gower whose believable and kindred presence allowed the audience to accept his story in all its variety.

Imposing a conceptual framework, however, need not preclude this kind of human and approachable Gower, as was evidenced in Neil Bartlett's 2003 production of the play at the Lyric, Hammersmith. Bartlett, acting as designer as well as director, set the play within three permanent grey walls, each with swing doors, double in the centre and single at the sides: most reviewers read the setting as a hospital, though some thought it could represent not only that but also a 'contemporary schoolroom', 'a mental institution [. . . or] simply the arena of the mind'.⁹⁰ Consequently, Will Keen's Pericles, beginning the play in gold silk pyjamas and ending it in 'grimy nightwear' and 'moth-eaten cardigan', seemed to be making an interior rather than a literal journey.⁹¹ Guiding the audience through it was the

⁸⁸ See Ford, *Worcester Evening News*, 13 September 1989, p. 63, and Steve Grant, *Time Out*, 25 April 1990, p. 53. Uncle Remus is the fictional African-American teller of subversive folk-tales; see R. Bruce Bickley Jr, 'Uncle Remus Tales', in *The New Georgia Encyclopedia* (3 October 2002) <<http://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/nge/Article.jsp?id=h-705>> [accessed 28 June 2005].

⁸⁹ Respectively, Claire Armitstead, *Financial Times*, 14 April 1990, SCL Theatre Records 151–52, p. 35, and Mary Moore, *Alnwick Advertiser*, 1 March 1990, SCL Theatre Records 149–50, p. 71. Both these critics also noted the way Thacker's production, in which Cerimon was for the first time played by a woman (Helen Blatch), highlighted the key nature of women's roles in the play.

⁹⁰ Respectively, Nicholas de Jongh, *Evening Standard*, 25 September 2003, and Sarah Hemming, *Financial Times*, 26 September 2003, in *Theatre Record*, 23 (2003), 1310–14 (pp. 1311–12); all quotations from reviews of this production are taken from this issue of *Theatre Record*. An undergraduate essay by one of my students usefully notes that the 'modern hospital' setting was 'clearly established through a piece of extra-textual action at the beginning of the play — actors walked across the stage in white coats pushing hospital beds and screens' (Vicky Richardson, DT2080 Shakespeare, Autumn Term 2003, Department of Drama and Theatre, Royal Holloway, University of London).

⁹¹ Respectively, Paul Taylor, *Independent*, 3 October 2003, p. 1311, and Charles Spencer, *Daily Telegraph*, 29 September 2003, p. 1313. Other costume details are from John Thaxter, *What's On*, 1 October 2003, p. 1311, and Kate Kellaway, *Observer*, 12 October 2003, p. 1313, who noted that a 'sorry dressing gown' replaced the pyjamas. Critics who commented on Pericles' interior journey include Taylor; Spencer; de Jongh, *Evening Standard*, 25 September 2003, p. 1311; Hemming, *Financial Times*, 26 September 2003, p. 1312; Michael Billington, *Guardian*,

Gower of Bette Bourne, described by one reviewer 'as the prima don(na) of the radical drag troupe Bloodlips', who 'has recently been stealing shows in trouser roles'.⁹² Reviews indicate that this production was no exception: displaying a 'shockingly relaxed but engrossing power', his 'wickedly complicit performance grabs the audience by the scruff of the neck and never lets go'.⁹³

Like Walker, Bourne's Gower remained on stage throughout the play, often seated stage right in front of the proscenium arch, reading a book that contained the story of Pericles, observing the action, or — as he became more emotionally involved — moving all over the stage.⁹⁴ Dressed in a grey-brown lab coat and wielding a blackboard and pointer, he struck half of the reviewers as a caretaker and the other half as a schoolteacher; Paul Taylor, noting the ambiguity, rationalized him as an 'elderly caretaker who fancies himself as posh lecturer'.⁹⁵ Actively educating the audience, he charted Pericles' travels around the Mediterranean by chalking arrows from one location to another on the map drawn on his blackboard. His instruction also provided some collusively comic moments: 'a droll man who feigned despair when the audience could not understand his Latin' proverb in the opening chorus, he showed he had anticipated such ignorance, 'turn[ing] his blackboard around to reveal the English translation' already written on it.⁹⁶ Similarly, when the knights presented their shields with Latin mottoes to Thaisa prior to the tournament, Gower used another blackboard, resembling 'a bookie's board at a race',⁹⁷ and removed its slats to reveal the English translation of each Latin saying. During the offstage joust, Gower 'double[d] as a bookie, taking bets

25 September 2003, p. 1312. Others referred to it as a dream and/or a nightmare; see John Gross, *Sunday Telegraph*, 5 October 2003, p. 1312, and Jane Edwardes, *Time Out*, 1 October 2003, p. 1312.

⁹² David Benedict, *Independent on Sunday*, 28 September 2003, p. 1311.

⁹³ Benedict, *Independent on Sunday*, 28 September 2003, p. 1311.

⁹⁴ The promptbook has been lost, so cannot be consulted for details of stage business, which are drawn from a variety of sources: my memory, student analyses of the production, reviews, and telephone conversations with Neil Bartlett (1 September 2005) and Bette Bourne (4 September 2005); I am very grateful to the director for his generous help, which included sending me his version of the play text, which incorporates some passages from Wilkins, modernizes some of Gower's language, and keeps his choruses intact. I would also like to thank all of the undergraduates who took DT2080 Shakespeare in Autumn Term 2003 for their careful observations of and thoughtful responses to the production.

⁹⁵ Taylor, *Independent*, 3 October 2003, p. 1311.

⁹⁶ Respectively, Richardson and Jodie-Anne White, DT2080 Shakespeare 2003.

⁹⁷ Bartlett's play text, [n.p.].

on Thaisa's suitors', and comically conveyed the joust itself 'by erasing the [mottos] of [...] would-be contenders, as we hear[d] sound effects of them tumbling from their steeds'.⁹⁸ In addition, Gower's 'droll recognition of the play's sometimes dodgy dramaturgy', making 'you laugh, both at him and with him', proved 'brilliantly successful [in guiding] your reactions to a fairy tale of misfortune and goodness by letting you know from the start that some of it will be hard to believe'.⁹⁹

Humour was, however, only one aspect of his characterization. Besides being 'splendidly spoken', Bourne's Gower was 'a creature of disparate moods', among which was a 'sensitive solicitude for the characters';¹⁰⁰ for example, as Leonine prepared to kill Marina, he became visibly distressed, able to conjure the story for his audience but unable to alter it in any way.¹⁰¹ As another reviewer commented, he made 'a marvellous narrator, addressing the audience with an irresistible mix of button-holing intimacy, wry humour, profound melancholy and not a hint of the usual campery. This Gower seems totally immersed in his story and, as a result, he immerses the audience in it, too'.¹⁰²

While Gower's interest in the story helped to increase the audience's own, his presence and activities also kept them aware that what they were watching *is* a story.¹⁰³ Unlike Richardson's naturalized shipboard storyteller, Bourne's Gower functioned as an explicit stage manager, 'directing lighting changes and breaks in scenes with a curt "Thank you" to those in the projection box, a remark that could also be taken as 'a response to his audience — a direct acknowledgement of their participation in his dramaturgical presentation'.¹⁰⁴ Besides conducting the

⁹⁸ Respectively, Kellaway, *Observer*, 12 October 2003, p. 1313, and Todd Higgs, DT2080 Shakespeare 2003.

⁹⁹ Respectively, Taylor, *Independent*, 3 October 2003, p. 1311 (first quotation); John Peter, *Sunday Times*, 5 October 2003, pp. 1313–14 (p. 1314, second and third quotations).

¹⁰⁰ Taylor, *Independent*, 3 October 2003, p. 1311.

¹⁰¹ Telephone conversation with the director.

¹⁰² Spencer, *Daily Telegraph*, 29 September 2003, p. 1313; for other enthusiastic responses, see Thaxter, *What's On*, 1 October 2003, p. 1310; Gross, *Sunday Telegraph*, 5 October 2003, p. 1312; Edwardes, *Time Out*, 1 October 2003, p. 1312; Hemming, *Financial Times*, 26 September 2003, p. 1312; Kellaway, *Observer*, 12 October 2003, p. 1313; Peter, *Sunday Times*, 5 October 2003, p. 1314; and Carole Woddis, *Herald*, 30 September 2003, p. 1310.

¹⁰³ Many student essays suggest this double response.

¹⁰⁴ Respectively, Nicky Doherty and White, both DT2080 Shakespeare 2003. Billington was the only critic to mention Gower's stage-managing aspect (*Guardian*, 25 September 2003, p. 1312).

presentation of the dumbshows,¹⁰⁵ Gower also controlled the three actors who reappeared throughout the production as fishermen, pirates, and brothel clients, 'at various times [...] ringing] a buzzer on the side of the stage to summon them to strike items from the set'.¹⁰⁶ However, he directly intervened in the onstage action only once, physically turning Pericles' head away from the dead Thaisa and towards the new-born Marina.¹⁰⁷ Student audience members who noted the gesture read it as empathetic,¹⁰⁸ while another noticed that Gower was 'visibly touched' by Pericles' and Marina's reunion; others further commented that the way Gower directed 'knowing glances and small chuckles at his audience' helped to shape their own reaction to characters and events — for instance, a gesture to the audience not only informed them that the sixth knight was Pericles but also assured them that he would win.¹⁰⁹ Gower's control over the telling of his story and his beneficent attitude towards it were encapsulated by Bartlett's decision to let Gower speak Diana's words in V. 1, while he froze the action for the only time and the silent goddess appeared high upstage. For Diana's speech, Bourne used a different register and the stage was miked to create an unearthly effect, but the voice was still recognizably Gower's.¹¹⁰ Such staging at once 'strengthen[ed] Gower's role] as a storyteller' whose voice creates different characters and gave him a supernatural aspect, as the 'conduit for [the goddess's] voice'.¹¹¹ In these

¹⁰⁵ Telephone conversation with the director.

¹⁰⁶ Higgs, DT2080 Shakespeare 2003. Higgs also noted that the three recurring figures could also be integrated into the production's psychodramatic interpretation by seeing them as employees at the institution, 'common faces that reappear in dreams and fantasies'.

¹⁰⁷ Daniel Taylor and Samantha Vaughan, both DT2080 Shakespeare 2003. Although Gower sometimes physically interacted with his dumbshows, for instance at IV. 4. 31, standing behind the bereaved Pericles kneeling at Marina's 'tomb' and seeming to help him up, Bartlett confirmed that his actual turning of Pericles' head away from his wife's corpse was the only such intervention, undertaken when the sailors silently appealed to him for help.

¹⁰⁸ Vaughan and Jonathan Wood, DT2080 Shakespeare 2003; Taylor, on the other hand, found the intrusion interfered with his own sympathy for Pericles, as it reminded him of the character's fictional status.

¹⁰⁹ Respectively, Doherty and Louise Edwards, both DT2080 Shakespeare 2003. Another student, Justyna Kwasniewska, commented that the way Gower watched the audience to note their reactions to events 'compelled [her] to look to Gower during the play to see what his responses were to the story and to the characters. It was almost as if "ancient Gower" was my teacher and guide, making sure I understood what was happening on stage'.

¹¹⁰ Telephone conversation with the director; Bartlett also recalled that the characters froze into a tableau as Gower, rather than Lysimachus, spoke 'leave him' (V. 1. 223).

¹¹¹ Respectively, Taylor and Vaughan, both DT2080 Shakespeare 2003.

ways, Bartlett's treatment of Gower managed to replicate some of the original functions and characteristics of the character outlined earlier: an authoritative storyteller with unearthly connections who acts as moral commentator and meta-theatrical device. However, whereas Shakespeare's treatment of Gower opened up a potential space between his understanding of events and the audience's own, Bartlett's handling encouraged the audience to adopt Gower's attitudes to characters and events uncritically.

Crucially, in constructing Gower in this way, Bartlett relinquished the character's identity as a noted literary author. Student responses make it clear that they found it very easy to relate to Gower, not only because of the charm and humour Bourne brought to the role, but also because of his resemblance to both a teacher and a janitor: a familiar and 'approachable' kind of figure, he was a '[humble] everyman' who 'seemed to be on the level of the audience'.¹¹² Interestingly, whereas professional reviewers fixed Gower's identity as one thing or the other, as noted earlier, students found it easier to accept his persona as multiple: 'a curious mixture of images[. . .] he was a stage manager who cleared the stage, but also a janitor in his long utility coat, and a teacher in his lowered spectacles and board pointer'.¹¹³ As several students noted, Gower's function of caretaker could be read as a metaphor for his role in 'taking care' of the story and of the audience's understanding of it.

Although reviewers categorized Bourne's Gower in a limiting way, not all of them felt the need to nail the production down in the same restrictive terms. Hemming, who accepted the possibility that the set represented all three possibilities — mental institution, mental space, and hospital — felt that the production's openness to interpretation made 'the drama more vivid' and personal to each spectator rather than confusing.¹¹⁴ Spencer, although positing the production's action as 'an interior journey of the mind as [Pericles] faces the prospect of death', similarly refused to pinpoint its exact nature:

¹¹² Respectively, Vaughan, Higgs, and Doherty, all DT2080 Shakespeare 2003.

¹¹³ Kat Smith, DT2080 Shakespeare 2003. Of the twelve students who categorized Gower, three described him as a janitor and four as a teacher or professor (including one who called him 'teacher-like', suggesting some ambiguity). The five remaining students found him a composite figure, three describing him as a combination of stage manager, caretaker/janitor, and teacher/lecturer, with the other two leaving the stage-manager aspect out of the equation. Of the fourteen reviews in *Theatre Record*, seven describe Gower as some kind of caretaker and five as a school-teacher, with Kellaway, *Observer*, 12 October 2003, calling him a 'lecturer/narrator'; Billington is alone in describing him as a 'stage-managing narrator' (*Guardian*, 25 September 2003, p. 1312).

¹¹⁴ Hemming, *Financial Times*, 26 September 2003, p. 1312.

Are we watching the memories of an old man, looking back, or the fantasies of a young one projecting a possible future? It doesn't matter. What becomes poignantly clear is the sense of mortality and depression that overhangs the staging [...] and the moving suggestion that miraculously happy endings might sometimes be possible. Ultimately, this is a play, and a production, about physical, spiritual and emotional recovery.¹¹⁵

Arguably, Gower's own fluidity contributed to such openness to the potential meanings of the play and production, just as his presentation contributed to emotional engagement with it. However, whereas Shakespeare's Gower seems designed to open up gaps between the audience and the story that he then encourages them to bridge for themselves, Bartlett's Gower helped to immerse the audience in his own emotions towards the story, leaving them free to give it particular meaning.

The fact that Bartlett's production was the third London had seen within six months suggests that *Pericles* can resonate strongly with contemporary audiences. A few months earlier, in late March 2003, just after the United States and Britain unleashed their bombs on Iraq, Yukio Ninagawa's Japanese production had played for a week at the National Theatre, London. Its framework was exceptionally poignant in the circumstances:

The evening begins and ends with a band of bedraggled, maimed refugees limping on stage to the sound of gunfire. There, they find refreshment in the form of the water that pours from taps into a scattering of dustbins. There too they follow the lead of Shakespeare's narrator Gower — here split into a sardonic man with an Asiatic lute and a gloating, squawking woman — and act out *Pericles*'s story.¹¹⁶

As Billington noted, 'watching shuffling victims of war, full of "man's infirmities", enacting an ancient folk tale about death and rebirth [...] never seems gratuitous. [...] In times of crisis, man has need of resurrection myths', of 'needed fable[s] about the continuity of human existence'.¹¹⁷ Perhaps one reason *Pericles* resonates so strongly today is because — unusually — its two royal protagonists never exploit, or even reveal, their identities to circumvent difficulties or achieve desires: the shipwrecked Pericles wins Thaisa on his own merits; the captive Marina escapes the brothel through her own skills. The framework of Ninagawa's production, in which suffering refugees performed the play under the direction of 'two Kabuki-style musicians',¹¹⁸ both reinforced the links between Shakespeare's characters and

¹¹⁵ Spencer, *Daily Telegraph*, 29 September 2003, p. 1313.

¹¹⁶ Benedict Nightingale, *The Times*, 31 March 2003, in *Theatre Record*, 23 (2003), 410–11.

¹¹⁷ Michael Billington, *Guardian*, 31 March 2003, in *Theatre Record*, 23 (2003), 412.

¹¹⁸ John Gross, *Sunday Telegraph*, 6 April 2003, in *Theatre Record*, 23 (2003), 409.

ordinary people and underlined the way those who suffer can mine a story like *Pericles* for its message of hope, its promise of survival. In this case, it was appropriate for the two Gowers to inhabit the same plane as the characters who re-enact the tale.

Bartlett's own programme notes, while similarly recognizing that *Pericles* is 'a story for the darkest of times', adds

that underneath this picture of a world and a time is something so personal that it cannot be spoken of directly, only staged for us to wonder at. As anyone who has ever lost someone they have loved will tell you, that the dead might return — that the inanimate might again become animate, that what is lost might be found — is one of our commonest and most painful dreams, one of our deepest subconscious desires. The fact that we know it isn't true, that we know it never happens, doesn't mean that we don't want to watch a story in which it does happen.¹¹⁹

Bartlett's comment hints at the symbiotic relationship between Gower's reinstatement in *Pericles* and the play's increasing popularity during the last fifty years. The human psyche has a profound need of stories qua stories: it is a truism, for instance, that fairy tales help us confront our deepest fears and desires. Given that realism has been the predominant mode of the Western mass media of film and television, with the latter increasingly exploiting actual rather than simulated reality, audiences have scant opportunity to make the kind of imaginative leaps of faith that a play like *Pericles* requires and that their own psyches crave.

Gower's importance as interlocutor between story and audience cannot be underestimated: he is the guide who can take us believing into a world that, despite evils and injustices all too similar to our own, is ultimately too good to be true. In Shakespeare's time, when his Renaissance audiences shared with their medieval forebears the hope of such a future world, a resurrected medieval poet may have been best placed to fulfil that function. Now that we no longer collectively inhabit that hope, the play's own insistence on its status as theatre and on the concomitant need for imaginative engagement, which Gower voices, provides the audience with one of its only opportunities to experience it. In such circumstances, Gower needs to be translated into a figure the audience can trust and with whom it can identify, be it an avuncular storyteller, a humble caretaker, or a pair of traditional entertainers. If he is translated successfully, Gower can do far more than 'glad' our ears and 'please' our eyes (I. 0. 4): he can bring, even if fleetingly, the 'New joy' he promises (Epilogue 18).

¹¹⁹ Bartlett, programme, p. 14; see note 26 above.

‘LA PRÉDICATION PAR PERSONNAGES’? EXPOSITOR FIGURES IN THE *MORALITÉS*

Alan Hindley

It has long been recognized that the art of preaching had a significant influence upon the development of medieval drama, particularly that of the moralizing theatre, where the separation of the real-life situation of the spectators and the fictive world of the action is an important feature of the didactic framework.¹ I propose here to consider some aspects of this crucial expository function in the late medieval French *moralités*, in many ways the Cinderellas of that large corpus of French play-texts spanning the years 1400–1550 — a period of profound religious and cultural upheaval — and which, like sermons, aimed to instruct audiences, whether in matters of Christian doctrine, religious polemics, or even secular ethics.² It is this distinctive element that has led a recent commentator to describe the *moralités* as ‘la prédication par personnages’.³

The aim of the *moralité* is outlined by the figure of Le Docteur in one of the earliest extant examples, *La Moralité du Jour Saint Antoine*, staged by students at

¹ See, for instance, Gerald R. Owst, *Literature and the Pulpit in Medieval England: A Neglected Chapter in the History of English Letters & of the English People* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1933); Marianne G. Briscoe, ‘Preaching and Medieval Drama’, in *Contexts for Early English Drama*, ed. by Marianne G. Briscoe and John Coldewey (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), pp. 151–72; A. Hindley, ‘Preaching and Plays: The Sermon and the Late Medieval French *Moralités*’, *Le Moyen Français*, 42 (1998), 71–85.

² For a useful recent survey of the French *moralité*, see J.-P. Bordier, ‘Le Moyen Age: La Fête et La Foi’, in *Le Théâtre en France des origines à nos jours*, ed. by Alan Viala (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1997), pp. 41–97; for the later development of the genre, cf. Charles Mazouer, ‘La moralité au XVI^e siècle en France’, *Bibliothèque d’Humanisme et Renaissance*, 58 (1996), 351–65.

³ Charles Mazouer, *Le théâtre français du moyen âge* (Paris: SEDES, 1998), p. 248.

the Collège de Navarre in Paris in 1426. Developing the theme of *Utinam saperent et intellegent ac novissima providerent* (Deuteronomy 32. 28–29), declaimed by God as the action begins and subsequently developed by the play's four characters (Dieu, Pechié, Le Dyable, and L'Omme), Le Docteur is at pains to highlight his didactic aim:

On ne pourroit monstrier assez
Par paroles ne par figures
Les maux qu'a fait es temps passez
Pechié et fait aux creatures. (lines 121–24)

[The evils that Sin has inflicted on people in the past, and continues to inflict, cannot be made sufficiently clear by words and allegories alone]⁴

It is worth emphasizing first of all here Le Docteur's insistence on both 'paroles' and 'figures', highlighting as they do two special characteristics of the *moralités*, namely their 'wordiness' coupled with their elaborate use of allegorical figures — both features of the moralities that modern readers probably find particularly challenging. Before coming on to my main enquiry, however, it might be worth pointing out that a relevant parallel could be drawn here between the comments of 'Le Docteur' and one of the most important (and controversial) pieces of iconographical evidence that we have about medieval theatres, namely Jean Fouquet's now iconic miniature of the 'Martyrdom of St Apollonia' from the Etienne de Chevalier *Livre d'Heures* (1452–60). Whatever light this document may cast on the realities of medieval stagecraft,⁵ it may serve as a valid starting-point for a discussion of expositor figures in medieval plays.

Whilst the focus in this miniature is on the suffering of the saint at the hands of her cruel executioners, we cannot fail to notice two further actions taking place on stage. First, the famous 'man in blue' — the 'meneur du jeu' — holding his text in one hand and wielding a baton with the other. Whatever his precise function (and this is problematic, as the Runnalls/Kipling debate has shown), he certainly

⁴ *Deux moralités inédites composées et représentées en 1427 et 1428 au Collège de Navarre*, ed. by A. Bossuat and R. Bossuat (Paris: Librairie d'Argences, 1955), pp. 19–88. All translations from original texts are my own.

⁵ See the debate between Graham A. Runnalls and Gordon Kipling in *Medieval English Theatre*, 19 (1997), 26–100. On the relationship between the miniature and medieval theatrical conventions, see the article by Philip Butterworth, 'Jean Fouquet's "The Martyrdom of St Apollonia" and "The Rape of the Sabine Women" as Iconographical Evidence of Medieval Theatre Practice', in *Essays in Honour of Peter Meredith* (Leeds: School of English, University of Leeds, 1998), pp. 53–67, which reproduces both miniatures in colour.

reminds us of the primacy of the text, which he appears to be consulting in order to direct the performance, moving the action along from place to place, and bringing in the performers when it is their turn. Such a continuity function was doubtless a crucial one, especially when one recalls that the actors involved probably had had only their own individual 'rollet' from which to learn their parts rather than the full text of the play.⁶ Whether Fouquet's figure had the same function within the action of the drama as did the 'meneur du jeu' of Mercadé's *Vengeance Jesu Christ* is not clear, since the Saint Apollonia text does not of course survive.⁷ However, it is possible that the attention of the 'man in blue' is directed here, not so much at the audience, but rather at the cast. If he is the 'chef de troupe' — or indeed the author — he is likely to have wanted the players not to mangle his text; and if a precise script had been vetted in advance of the performance — as was increasingly the case in northern towns in the mid-sixteenth century, when the religious debates of the time brought greater vigilance on the part of the authorities — the consequences of any infringement could sometimes be severe.⁸ Whether the 'meneur' of Fouquet's miniature is 'inside' the action of the drama or not, it is certainly the case that the prompter figure — another reminder of the primacy of the 'script', and shown peering from behind the curtains in some of the familiar iconography⁹ — is clearly intended to have a purely practical function outside the action, his semiconcealment a sign of the need to preserve an element of theatrical illusion.

It might also be appropriate to add a comment here on the importance attached by the *moralités* to the significance of text at the very centre of a play's didactic ethos. Not only are classical and biblical texts frequently cited as ethical 'authorities' for the moral improvement of the spectators,¹⁰ key quotations are

⁶ On actors' 'roles' and their relation to the full text of a play, see Graham A. Runnalls, 'An Actor's Role in a French Morality Play', *French Studies*, 42 (1988), 398–407.

⁷ On the 'meneur du jeu' of the Mercadé play, see Peter Happé, 'Expositor Figures in some Cycle Plays in French and German', in this volume.

⁸ See the article by Michel Rousse, 'Une représentation théâtrale à Rouen en 1556', *European Medieval Drama*, 7 (2003), 87–115 (p. 112).

⁹ See, for instance, the illustration of a booth stage from MS 126 of the Bibliothèque municipale de Cambrai, a collection of secular and religious songs, dating from c. 1540; also the famous detail from the *Temperantia* of Peter Breughel the Elder (Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam).

¹⁰ Sometimes in great profusion; see, for instance, the study by Yves Le Hir, 'Sur des citations latines dans la Moralité *L'Homme pecheur*', in *Parler(s) du Moyen Âge: Hommage à Albert Meiller* (Grenoble: Université Stendhal-Grenoble, 1998), pp. 125–32.

also provided, sometimes even visually for the audience to contemplate (on a tapestry, perhaps?), or else dramatically revealed to provide a 'coup de théâtre'.¹¹ This may well have been a feature of the recently discovered *Ju du Grand Dominé et du Petit*, staged in Tournai in the 1540s, which preaches the importance of reading for oneself the penitential psalms.¹² This near fixation with text, again in the context of the sectarian polemics of the time, appears in a more extreme form in the play of *Les Théologastres* (1527), a Protestant play in which the character of 'Le Texte de Sainte Escripiture' has to be physically washed on stage.¹³ Even those 'moralités' that took the form of dumbshows gracing the platforms set up at royal entries often required the presence of explanatory texts it seems, 'keys' to the complexities of the allegories being presented, lest the public — or indeed the royal personage being honoured — draw the wrong conclusions.¹⁴

But, to return to the *Ste Apolline* illustration, the Fool we see there is a quite different matter. On the crudest of levels, of course, we might describe him as the most basic of 'expositor' figures as he bares his arse to the audience, his 'mooning' an eloquent contrast not just with the sufferings of the saint, but also with the 'official' custodian of the script, the 'words'. We shall return in due course to the fool's distinctive presence both inside and outside the action of the *moralités*. Suffice it to say now that, wherever he appears, the *Fol* acts as a catalyst to the spectators' active involvement in what is being played, thus underlining the crucial link between performers and spectators that lies at the heart of this discussion.

The most obvious of such link-figures in the French morality plays are those characters who remain essentially outside the action of the play, their function to usher the spectators into the fictional world of the drama, having perhaps first exhorted them to silence (*Les Sept péchés mortels*);¹⁵ they will sometimes do the

¹¹ As for instance in certain Dutch *zinnespelen*, in which tableaux vivants, or *togen* (sing. *toog*) were displayed as a visual exposition of the dialogue; see B. A. M. Ramakers, *Spelen en figuren: Toneelkunst en processiecultuur in Oudenaarde tussen Middeleeuwen en Moderne Tijd* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1998).

¹² See Alan Hindley and Graeme Small, 'Le *Ju du Grand Dominé et du Petit*: une moralité tournaisienne inédite du moyen âge tardif. Etude et édition', *Revue belge de Philologie et d'Histoire*, 80 (2002), 413–56.

¹³ *La Farce des Théologastres*, ed. by Cl. Longeon, Textes littéraires français (Geneva: Droz, 1989).

¹⁴ For further details, see Joël Blanchard, 'Le spectacle du rite: les entrées royales', *Revue historique*, 308 (2003), 475–518 (p. 481).

¹⁵ *Mystères et moralités du Manuscrit 617 de Chantilly*, ed. by G. Cohen (Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1975), pp. 39–77 (lines 20–30).

same thing in reverse at the end of the play, with a 'valet' that might also contain an apology for any shortcomings in the production (*Les Freres de Maintenant*).¹⁶ Such figures can be especially valuable in what they tell us about matters of staging, as in the case of the unnamed character who introduces the play of *Bien Advisé Mal Advisé* in the Vérard edition of 1499.¹⁷ The meticulous description here of the arrangement and interconnections of the different 'lieux' not only provides fascinating detail on the nature of the acting space; it also sets out the contrasting allegorical routes to be followed by the twin protagonists, enabling the playwright to exploit an audience's familiarity with the multi-set stage as a representation of the cosmos. The pilgrim route of Bien Advisé, for instance, will take him via the virtues of Patience ('dressed in bright red'), Diligence, Obedience, Abstinence, Chastity, Prayer, Fasting, Charity; higher up still, he will encounter Satisfaction, Penance ('holding a scourge'), Confession, Humility, Contrition, and Reason, finally to die a good death in the arms of Bonne Fin. Turning then to Mal Advisé's road to ruin, the prologue continues:

Et veez cy le chemin senestre,
Dont Mal Advisé sera maistre:
Tendresse y est, et Oyseuse,
Qui en tout temps est perilleuse.
Veez cy Rebellion et Folie,
Et puis apres Houllerie;
Hoquellerie je vous monstreray,
Assez pres de luy Vaine Gloire,
Et si veez là Desesperance,
Povreté et Male Meschance;
Un peu plus bas est Larrecin,
Et puis est Honte et Male Fin.¹⁸

[Over here is the left-hand way, of which Mal Advisé will be master. Tender Feeling is there, as is Sloth, who is always a danger. Here is Rebellion and Folly, and then Debauchery. I will show you Fisticuffs and Vainglory, who is close by. Over there are

¹⁶ See *Ancien théâtre français*, ed. by Anatole de Montaiglon and Violllet Le Duc (Paris: Jannet, 1854) [hereafter *ATF*], III, 87–126 (p. 126). The 'valet' in particular may sometimes be provided by an actor, or actors, who step out of character to return the audience to the real world; cf. the ending of *Les Enfants de Maintenant*, *ATF*, III, 5–86 (pp. 84–86).

¹⁷ Werner Helmich, *Moralités françaises: Réimpression fac-simile de vingt-deux pièces allégoriques imprimées au XV^e et XVI^e siècles* (Geneva: Editions Slatkine, 1980) [hereafter Helmich], I, 1–110.

¹⁸ Helmich, I, 1–2. A similar meaningful pattern is outlined in the preacherly introduction to *Les Blasphémateurs du nom de Dieu*, but briefer here, 'de paour qu'il vous ennoye' (for fear you might find it boring). Helmich, II, 105–57 (p. 106).

Despair, Poverty and Misfortune, with Petty Theft a little lower down; and then come Shame and Evil End.]

Thus, as well as calling the audience to order ('Seez vous chascun en son lieu | Affin d'entendre mieux le jeu | Pour Dieu, et nous veuillez paix faire'; let everyone be seated, the better to hear our play; in God's name, pray silence!), the Prologue figure here goes much further, as he instructs his audience how to read the various 'divisions' of the stage, expressing the hope that they will use their intelligence to understand the action appropriately:

Monstré vous ay les personnaiges,
Et si me semblez assez sages
Pour les entendre en bonne guise,
Ainsi que le jeu divise. (Helmich, I, 2)

[I have shown you the characters, and you seem sensible enough to understand them properly and the way in which the play sets them out.]

A feature of the introductory section of *Les Blasphémateurs du nom de Dieu* — as indeed of the *Saint Antoine* play referred to earlier — is that the action sets out to develop a biblical quotation (*Benedicentes deo hereditabunt terram: Maledicentes autem disperibunt*) in much the same way that a preacher would develop the theme of the day using fictional exempla to illustrate his lesson. It is indeed in this fictional element that Alan E. Knight seeks to draw the essential distinction between the *mystère* and the *moralité*: whereas the former commemorates a sacred historical past, the latter 'teaches a lesson in human ethics by presenting examples of conduct both good and bad'.¹⁹ The morality plays thus abound in preacher-figures, part of whose function is to outline the relevance of the exempla being enacted to the prospects of salvation of those in the audience. Such expository figures are variously designated as Le Prologue (*L'Homme pecheur, L'Homme juste et l'Homme mondain*), Le Docteur (*Moralité du Jour Saint Antoine*), L'Hermite (*Les Sept Pechiés Mortels*), Le Messagier (*Le Monde qui tourne le dos*), Nuncius (*La Moralité d'Argent*), Preco (*Les Frères de Maintenant*), Le Prescheur (*Le Mauvais Riche*), Le Religieux (*La Moralité de Charité*), L'Acteur (= Auteur) (*L'Enfant prodigue, L'Homme juste et l'Homme mondain*).²⁰ Like the preacher, they will

¹⁹ Alan E. Knight, *Aspects of Genre in Late Medieval French Drama* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1983), pp. 34–37 (p. 35).

²⁰ I have excluded from this list Le Prestre of the *Moralité de l'Omme pecheur* (Helmich, I, 113–421), a character who is very much within the action of the play and whose ministry is essentially pastoral as he points the Sinner towards salvation via the necessary stages of Contrition and Confession.

sometimes describe their play as 'figure', or indeed as 'exemplum', thereby drawing attention to the allegorical meaning that needs to be drawn from the literal content and given some form of official exegesis for the benefit of the spectator. As Raison puts it at the end of *Le Lymon et la Terre*, reminding the audience of the play's dust-to-dust theme: 'Vecy de trestous l'eritage, | C'est La Terre et Le Limon, | Ou tous sans faillir pourrisson. | Par cest exemple le voyez' (This is the inheritance of us all: Earth and Clay, to which we shall surely all return. You can see this in our play, lines 1256–59).²¹ This is what the Nuncius (Le Messenger) means too at the beginning of Jazme Oliou's *Moralité d'Argent* (c. 1475), where the words 'moralité' and 'exemplere' are closely linked:

Avons empris l'esbatement
De une moralité notable:
Dieu don que nostre enseignement
Peust estre a toux profitable!
On dist que est demonstracion,
Belle doctrine et exemplere. (lines 5–10)²²

[We have undertaken to entertain you with a morality play that's worthy of your attention: may God grant that our teaching may be beneficial to you all! It is a demonstration and illustration of how to conduct oneself properly.]

Such characters as these are in constant dialogue with the spectator, outlining the significance of the spectacle as a preacher might his text. In the printed text of *L'Enfant prodigue*, intended primarily for the armchair reader, L'Acteur [= Author] concludes by spelling out the meaning of the parable:

Et moralement celuy pere est Dieu, et ses deux enfants sont deux manieres de gens au monde; les ungs les bons, les autres pecheurs, Par l'Enfant aisé sont entendus les justes, qui tousjours demeurent avec Dieu leur pere par grace; et par l'Enfant prodigue les pecheurs qui despendent les biens receus de Dieu follement en volupté et plaisance mondaine [. . .]. Et comme le pere a receu son enfant — pardonné et festoyé — aussi nostre Seigneur reçoit les pecheurs qui se retournent a luy, comme dict est, leur faisant misericorde, et leur promettant donner paradis.²³

²¹ *Moralité du Lymon et de la Terre*, in *Le Recueil Trepperel: Fac-similé des 35 pièces de l'original précédé d'une introduction par Eugénie Droz* (Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, [1970]), p. xix. Quotations are taken from my own transcription of this play.

²² *Moralité à sept personnages: Le Messenger, Argent, Bon Advis, L'Homme, Fort Despenseur, Terre, Bien-et-Mal*, ed. by P. Aebischer, in 'Moralité et farces des manuscrits Laurenziana-Ashburnham', *Archivum Romanicum*, 13 (1929), 448–518.

²³ *L'Enfant prodigue, moralité del sec. XVI*, ed. by G. Macri (Lecce: Adriatica Editrice Salentia, 1982), p. 332.

[The father here symbolizes God and his two children represent two contrasting types of people: the good and the bad. The elder son represents the righteous, who are always with God through His grace; the prodigal represents sinners who spend God's bounty, foolishly indulging in worldly pleasures [. . .]. And just as the father has received his son, whom he forgives and welcomes with open arms, so does our Lord receive those sinners who come back to Him, to whom He grants His mercy and promises a place in paradise.]

The extent to which such figures were thought to be an essential moralizing ingredient is exemplified by the play called *Veterator* (1512), a version in Latin by one Connybertus (Nicholas Barthélémy?) of *La Farce de Maître Pierre Pathelin*.²⁴ This 'translation', probably intended for a student audience and betraying some of the characteristics of moralizing Roman comedy, includes the additional role of Comicus, who provides a link between action and audience, often pointing out the moral of the play (as in the first and last scenes), but also offering more general commentary and explanation, especially in the 'divers langages' episode. However one interprets the role of Comicus here (and the influence of Plautine comedy may well be at work, as Keith Bate has suggested), it is nonetheless clear that Connybertus, in seeking to add a didactic element to the farce for the moral enlightenment of his students, has added a role that would have been familiar to audiences of contemporary vernacular plays, especially the *moralités*.²⁵

Some morality playwrights of the later Middle Ages are capable of weaving quite sophisticated exegetic effects into their plays. None better illustrates this than the *Moralité de Charité*, which builds two sermons into the action: first there is a homily on I Corinthians 13 (*Charitas patiens est, benigna est . . .*), delivered by an unspecified Prologue figure; the play that follows then turns into a dramatized exemplum on the parable of the rich man (Luke 16. 19–23), containing within it yet another sermon (lines 1633–1818) delivered by Le Religieux on the subject of *Beati sunt qui audiunt verbum Dei et custodiunt illud* (Luke 11. 28), and studded with calls to repentance.²⁶ Both sermons adopt the traditional pattern, in which

²⁴ See Walter Funz, *Comoedia noua que Veterator inscribitur alias Pathelinus ex peculiari lingua in Romanum traducta eloquium: Die neulateinische Bearbeitung des 'Maistre Pierre Pathelin'* (Zurich: Juris Verlag, 1977).

²⁵ For further discussion of the role of Comicus, see Raymond Lebègue, 'Le rôle du Comicus dans le *Veterator*', in *Etudes sur le théâtre français, Moyen Age*, ed. by Raymond Lebègue (Paris: Nizet, 1971), I, 120–26; and Keith Bate, 'Le *Veterator*, *Pathelin* et la continuité de deux traditions: latine et vernaculaire', in *Maistre Pierre Pathelin: Lectures et contextes*, ed. by Denis Hüe and Darwin Smith (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2000), pp. 123–40.

²⁶ *La Moralité de Charité*, in *ATF*, III, 337–424.

an initial statement of the theme (in Latin) is followed by an *Ave Maria*, yet in this play their dramatic perspectives are significantly different. The opening homily, essentially outside the play, relates the biblical quotation to the theme of the action that will follow, explaining to the audience the moral significance of what they are about to see, the play's twelve characters — each of which is reviewed in turn — serving as a 'beau miroir' to the audience. One of the characters described is Le Religieux:

Qui de bien faire est moult joyeux,
 Qui au Monde viendra prescher
 Affin qu'il vueille delaisser
 Tous les peschez qu'il a commis
 Envers le roy de Paradis. (*ATF*, III, 339).

[whose delight it is to do good, and who will come and preach to the World, so that he might renounce all the sins he has committed against the king of Paradise.]

However, later on, when Le Religieux delivers his (much longer) sermon, it is as a character within the play that he speaks, exhorting the other protagonists — and also the audience, who thus becomes part of the action — to be mindful of Christ's sacrifice on their behalf: 'Helas, peuple, remembre toy | De la peine et de la douleur | Que souffrit nostre createur' (*ATF*, III, 397). He concludes by reiterating the theme of his homily:

Mes bons amys, Dieu depriez
 Pour les ames des trespassez,
 Et, s'il vous plaist, aussi pour nous,
 Et nous prirons Dieu pour vous;
 En la fin, pour avoir pardon,
 De nos pechez remission
 Devotement chascun dira
Pater noster et *Ave Maria*. (*ATF*, III, 400)

[My good friends, pray to God for the souls of the departed, and please also pray for us, as we will pray for you. Finally, to have pardon and remission of our sins, let each one of us devoutly say 'Our father' and 'Hail Mary'.]

The place of this sermon *within* the dramatic action is further underlined by the fact that it does not have the desired effect on all the listeners: Le Povre hears it loud and clear and is ultimately rewarded. Le Monde, however, is disdainful, dismissing the preacher as 'un hongneur' (grumbler), whilst L'Avaricieux has heard nothing at all: 'Car certes, je me suis endormy | Trestous au long du preschement' (I was asleep throughout the entire sermon). He will get his commeuppance at the end of the play when, together with Jeunesse (who has treated his mother, Vieillesse,

uncharitably), he will be assailed by La Mort: 'percé de part en part | Avec la pointe de [son] dard' (pierced through with the point of his spear).

A similar shift of perspective may be observed in *Bien Advisé Mal Advisé*: having put on the costume provided by Humilité, Bien Advisé *se tient emprès, affin qu'il voye le jeu* (stands to one side in order to watch the play); in other words he becomes a spectator within the play, meaningfully observing the lesson provided by Mal Advisé, who has just repaired to the tavern with Tendresse, Oysance, Rebellion, Hoquellerie, and Folie.²⁷ This convergence of two levels of discourse, as Knight has pointed out, once more signals the close interaction between theatrical action and the real world.²⁸

It needs to be pointed out of course that there is a fundamental difference here between the preacher-figures who serve as intermediaries between audience and action, and those characters — mostly allegorical personifications, but not always — who frequently take on a preaching function, together with the appropriate techniques and rhetoric. The former characters have a number of (practical) functions, as we have already noted: to define the physical acting-space; to silence the audience; to introduce the cast; to sign off at the end — in other words to make clear to the audience the all-important temporary distinction between fiction and reality. However, given that the common function of both sermon and morality play is to bring men and women to penitence and faith, many of the characters, particularly the allegories, will deliver speeches that with their Latin quotations and hortative rhetoric clearly imitate the preacher. On a fairly basic level, we may cite the character of Bon Avis (Good Advice) in the *Moralité d'Argent*, who backs up his admonitions to spend money wisely by pursuing L'Homme around the stage to remind him of his impending doom: *Bon avis le set [suit] par la place an li demoustrant comment il doit fere et se gouverner* (Good Advice follows him round the place, showing him how to act and behave).²⁹ Some playwrights have sermons so much in mind that they devise characters that look over the shoulders of the protagonists to preach to the audience beyond. At the beginning of *Bien Advisé Mal Advisé*, for instance, Franche Voulenté, addressing both protagonist and audience and adopting that characteristic auto-presentational mode that

²⁷ Helmich, I, 20.

²⁸ Alan E. Knight, 'Uses of Rhetoric in Medieval French Drama', in *Essays in Early French Literature Presented to Barbara M. Craig*, ed. by Norris J. Lacy and Jerry C. Nash (York, SC: French Literature Publications, 1982), pp. 73–79 (p. 75).

²⁹ *La Moralité d'Argent*, ed. by Aebischer, p. 483.

Werner Helmich has termed *ekphrasis*,³⁰ outlines the importance of the moral choices with which each individual is confronted:

[...] l'on m'appelle
 Par mon nom Franche Voulenté.
 Dieu me forma et me fit dame.
 Des ameres d'Adam fut né.
 Par moy tout homme et toute femme
 Certes est sauvé ou dampné
 Tous biens et maux sont fais part,
 Car je conseille et desconseille. (Helmich, I, 4)

[My name is Free Will. God created me in the form of a woman, born of Adam's lovers. Because of me every man and every woman is either saved or damned. I am found in both good and evil, for I give advice both good and bad.]

Such expository speeches — of which one could cite countless other instances in these plays — might well explain our antipathy to the morality play, many of whose characters and actions are dictated not by the canons of Aristotle or Horace, but rather by the necessity to demonstrate an unambiguous message using the expository techniques of the preacher.³¹ Yet in fact some plays can present a considerable subtlety of perspective in their use of these techniques. Such expositions can become especially powerful, for instance, when transposed to a character one least expects. In the student play of *Les Enfants de Maintenant* (early sixteenth century?), the incorrigible Finet suddenly becomes, at the moment of his execution on the gallows, a preacher figure, directly addressing his audience with an explanation of the meaning of the spectacle before them:

On peult par moy apercevoir
 Que, par mon faulx gouvernement,
 Des enfans suys de Maintenant.

³⁰ See Werner Helmich, *Die Allegorie im französischen Theater des 15. und 16. Jahrhunderts* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1976), pp. 46–47.

³¹ Cf. the comment of Armand Strubel, 'Grant senefiance a': *Allégorie et littérature au Moyen Age* (Paris: Champion, 2002), p.313: 'Avec l'exemplarité de l'intrigue et la fixité des acteurs, les fondements aristotéliens de la pratique théâtrale antique [...] sont abandonnés: la vraisemblance psychologique, la notion de "caractères moyens", l'historicité de l'action, la contingence des événements dramatiques, créatrice de tension, tout cela n'a pas cours' (With the exemplary nature of the intrigue and the fixed nature of the roles, the Aristotelian basis of the theatre of the ancient world, all this is completely abandoned: psychological verisimilitude, the notion of 'middling characters', historical action, dramatic contingency, the creation of dramatic tension — none of that applies here).

Enraigé suis et hors du sens,
 Car j'ay trestout perdu le sens,
 Pourtant que n'ay voulu entendre
 Le bien que me voulut apprendre
 Discipline par son conseil.
 J'appercoy maintenant a l'œil
 Ma faulte, las ! mais c'est trop tard. (ATF, III, 70)

[You can tell from my bad behaviour that I'm one of the Children of Today. I'm raging mad, for I've lost all reason because I've failed to heed the good that Lady Discipline sought to teach me with her advice. I can now see that it was my own fault, but it's too late, alas!]

More strikingly unexpected 'inversions' occur when not a virtue, but a vice, will adopt a distinctly sermonic voice. In the late fifteenth-century *Moralité du Lymon et de la Terre* for instance, trying to tempt mankind to wickedness, Le Monde exhorts the audience not to worry about Death: 'Laissez là Mort. Plus n'y pensez. | Qui a moy servir s'avira | Aura tousjours biens assez' (Take no notice of Death; pay no heed to her. Whosoever seeks to serve me will always have riches aplenty). But, lest we take his words too literally, he is careful to add parenthetically, in that expository preacherly manner:

Par mon propre nom, j'ay nom Monde.
 Mais par nature suis immonde,
 Au contraire sens suis nommez.
 Avecques moy a moult trop mondains,
 Mais dedans ung bien peu de temps,
 Les rends inutiles et vains.³²

[My name is World, but really I'm the very opposite: foul. I'm frequented by those who are far too worldly-minded, but who, in no time at all, I render worthless and vain.]

Similarly Finet and Malduict, our two *Enfants de Maintenant*, having rejected the chance of a formal education with Instruction and Discipline, are unable to resist the card-school proposed by the tavern-keeper Jabien (essentially a devil-figure) and his daughter Luxure. Once hooked by the pleasures of the flesh, the pair are then subjected to a disturbing 'anti-sermon' from Jabien's 'bible', the *Livre de Perdition*, in which every precept of the Christian message is turned on its head:

Regnier Dieu debvez, et saintz,
 Pour une espingle et pour moins ;
 Et qui vous vouldra corriger

³² *Recueil Trepperel*, no. XIX.

Ne vous tenez point de frapper ;
 Et qui voudra a vous combatre
 Pour ung soufflet rendez-en quatre.
 Car se voulez venir a bien,
 Point ne fault estre Jabien ;
 Ainsi nous le dit ung chapitres
 D'un livre dont tel est le titre :
Hic liber perditionis
 Que doibt sçavoir *homo omnis*
 Et pour ce, mes beaulx escoliers,
 Soyez fermes et bien entiers
 De me porter grant reverence. (ATF, III, 37)

[You must deny God and His saints for no reason at all; and if anyone should chastise you for it, then don't hesitate to hit them; and if anyone should fight back, then for one blow inflict four times as many. We are told this in a chapter taken from a book entitled *Liber perditionis*, which all men should know. And so, my handsome pupils, be steadfast and true in my respectful service.]

Some of the most dramatically powerful scenes in the morality plays are seen when this expository role can be enhanced by visual means involving stage-business, properties, and costumes, as for instance in Simon Bourgoïn's encyclopaedic block-buster *L'Homme juste et l'Homme mondain* (c. 1500), where the standard *psychomachia* is elaborated ritually in a series of battles for the souls of the two protagonists, in which each vice is defeated by its opposite virtue.³³ In one of the earliest plays, *La Moralité des sept pechiés mortels et des sept vertus* (late fourteenth century), L'Hermite asks Notre-Dame to have the vices forcibly 'converted' into virtues in a tableau involving elaborate costume-change.³⁴

This kind of visual symbolism is usually carefully *explained* by characters who frequently — and sometimes lengthily — exploit their physical appearance to demonstrate their significance. In the case of more complex abstractions additional non-verbal elaboration was used, sometimes involving masks, as in *Mestier*, *Marchandise*, *Le Berger*, *Le Temps*, *Les Gens* (mid-fifteenth century) where Gens wears 'un faux visage par derriere la teste' (a mask on the back of his head).³⁵ A similar arrangement may have been employed in the two plays in which Dame Fortune appears (*Bien Advisé Mal Advisé* and *L'Homme juste*), her characteristic

³³ Helmich, I, 423–881 (pp. 582–92).

³⁴ *Mystères et moralités*, ed. by Cohen, pp. 39–77 (lines 1264–2323).

³⁵ *Le théâtre français avant la Renaissance*, ed. by E. Fournier (Paris, [1872]; New York: Burt Franklin, 1964), pp. 44–53.

twin visage a reminder of the ambiguous appeal of worldly pleasure and power, all of which is meticulously explained.³⁶ This type of composite costume could be quite elaborate in its symbolism: in the *Moralité du Monde qui tourne le dos à Chascun* (1541),³⁷ by Jean d'Abondance, Le Monde quizzes Chacun about his strange attire. Chacun explains (lines 423–44) that different items of his clothing represent the various estates: his 'bonnet rond' (round hat) the Church; his 'gardebras' (arm-plate) the nobility; his 'beau saye' (woollen coat) the merchant class; his 'chausses' (britches) the peasantry who toil 'night and day to feed us all'. 'No matter', retorts Le Monde, seeking to tempt Chacun into following the ways of the world, 'Je vous traiterez comme ung conte' (I'll treat you like a lord) — an eloquent visual exposition of the irresistible appeal of the pleasures of the flesh.³⁸

It may be appropriate to point out here that this distinctive expository mode is not always played, as it were, 'straight'. When some of the commonplaces of the genre come to be hijacked in plays in which the aim is satirical rather than didactic, or where playwrights appear to be parodying distinguishing stylistic features, such treatment can perhaps have a more direct appeal for the modern reader. Two examples will suffice: the *Moralité de l'Homme Obstiné*, from Pierre Gringore's carnival trilogy, the *Jeu du Prince des Sotz* (1512); and *La Condamnation de Banquet* (1503?) by the Parisian physician Nicolas de la Chesnaye. Prompted no doubt by his own Gallican sympathies, and seeking to justify Louis XII's campaigns against Pope Julius II, Pierre Gringore, having portrayed the pontiff as a fool in the preceding *sottie*, then designates him in his morality play as 'L'Homme obstiné', though he is certainly not here the usual Everyman figure. Gringore instead depicts him almost as a *matamore*, who accuses himself of the worst evils in precisely that up-front exegetic style noted earlier. No longer sporting the cap and bells of Mère Sotte, the Pope now appears even more thinly disguised as a warrior figure who boldly vaunts himself as 'pervers' (line 89), 'menteur' (line 93),

³⁶ See Helmich, I, 76–77 and 435–36. Similar use of a particoloured costume provides an obvious solution to the portrayal of the split character of Bien-et-Mal in the *Moralité d'Argent*.

³⁷ *Le Monde qui tourne le dos à Chascun a vingt et deux personnages. Composé par Jehan D'Abondance, Bazochien, habitant de la ville du Pont Saint Esperit. Imprimé nouvellement a Lyon par Jaques Moderne* (Lyon, 1541). The printed edition of this play is housed in the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek in Munich (MS P. o. gall. 8). Quotations here are taken from my transcription of this play.

³⁸ For an analysis of this play, see A. Hindley, 'Une moralité peu connue de Jean d'Abondance: *Le Monde qui tourne le dos à Chascun* (1541)', in *Mainte belle œuvre faite: Études sur le théâtre médiéval offertes à Graham A. Runnalls*, ed. by Denis Hüe, Mario Longtin, and Lynette Muir (Orléans: Paradigme, 2005), pp. 205–21.

'variable comme la mer' (line 94), with a passion for astrology (lines 172, 453) and a craving for alcohol (lines 118–20).³⁹ Little wonder that he incurs the wrath of Pugnition Divine, whose condemnation is total, with no possibility in this play of an interceding Virgin Mary or a Misericorde to come to his rescue.

La Condamnation de Banquet,⁴⁰ whose strongly ironic tone has been studied by Jelle Koopmans,⁴¹ also shows how a genre that took itself seriously and was characterized by distinctive stylistic features could be comically exploited. It also usefully brings us back to where we started: to the fool of the Saint Apollonia miniature. Humour is a not infrequent ingredient of the morality genre.⁴² Indeed it may well have been dictated by pulpit influence. There are occasions, indeed, where laughter may derive from the spectators' understanding of the close conjunction of sermon and morality play, where the sermonic framework may be given a parodic twist, especially where political or social topics are treated. De la Chesnaye's play can be seen as a warning against the excesses of food and drink, but also on a deeper level, where the grotesque ailments and their cures may be said to parody the vices and virtues of the traditional *moralité*. The appearance in this play of Le Docteur Protolocuteur establishes a framework that stands in ironic counterpoint to the play's festive tone. His initial address points out that the entertainment will serve as a 'bonne instruction' (line 26):

Saichez que manger a oultrance
Destruct les gens et moult peult nuyre,
Mais la vertu de temperence
Fait l'homme priser et reluyre. (lines 44–47)

³⁹ Pierre Gringore, *Le Jeu du Prince des Sotz et de Mere Sotte*, ed. by Alan Hindley (Paris: Champion, 2000), pp. 121–55.

⁴⁰ Nicolas de la Chesnaye, *La Condamnation de Banquet*, ed. by Jelle Koopmans and Paul Verhuyck (Geneva: Droz, 1991). It should be noted here that the discovery of a late sixteenth-century Swiss version of the *Condamnation* by the Lucerne playwright Reneward Cysat in a manuscript that also contains a transcription of the French original has recently prompted some rethinking on the question of the provenance — and indeed the authorship (Guillaume Flamang?) — of this play; see Jelle Koopmans, 'La fin de Banquet', in *Mainte belle œuvre faicte*, ed. by Hüe, Longtin, and Muir, pp. 251–64.

⁴¹ Jelle Koopmans, 'Une pièce parodique à trois codes implicites: *La Moralité de la Condamnation de Banquet*', *Fifteenth Century Studies*, 18 (1991), 159–74.

⁴² See Alan Hindley, 'Huy rire et puis demain pleurer: Taking Humour Seriously in the *Moralités*', in *Grant risee? The Medieval Comic Presence / La Présence comique médiévale: Essays in Memory of Brian J. Levy*, ed. by Adrian P. Tudor and Alan Hindley, *Medieval Texts and Cultures of Northern Europe*, 11 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006), pp. 151–71.

[Be aware that eating to excess is harmful and destructive. The virtue of temperance, however, attracts great esteem.]

Halfway through the action, Le Docteur steps stage-front once again ponderously to 'faire son sermon' (lines 1274–1552) which contains the full panoply of sermon styles (hortative rhetoric, authority figures, Latin quotations, etc.), at the end of which Le Fol interjects:

Mais serons nous cy longuement
Escoutant maistre Salomon
Cuydant, pour crier haultement,
Qu'on obeysse a son sermon? (lines 1545–48)

[How long are we going to listen to Solomon here, who thinks that if he shouts at the top of his voice, we'll be more inclined to heed his sermon?]

A similar Fol/Sage dialogue closes the play (lines 3608–44); however it is Le Fol who has the last sceptical word in a speech which allows the action to end on a jocular note. It is as if Nicolas de la Chesnaye is acknowledging that for his play to be a *moralité*, it has to contain sermons and sermonizing, characteristic motifs which he is then able playfully to exploit to comic ends. It is this contrast between the 'official' intervention of Le Docteur, and the 'unofficial' patter of the fool that brings us to the final part of this essay.

As we consider the St Apollonia miniature, we need to remind ourselves that there is more to the stage fool than simply to provide comic relief or to serve as a kind of stage manager. Indeed in the *moralité* especially, he can be put to effective didactic use as a means of explaining the significance of the fictional action taking place and its relevance to the moral journey of those in the audience. The Fool often does this by acting as a contrast to a play's more formal expository figures, thereby drawing our attention to the important 'rhetorical underpinnings'⁴³ of the morality plays. Their utterances are usually voiced in the lowest of low styles, as in the prattle of the Sot at the end of Jean d'Abondance's *Le Monde qui tourne le dos*:

Bona dies! La goutte *vobis!*
Vous entendez que je veulx dire?
Je ne me puis tenir de rire!
J'ay veu, je ne le diray pas.
Si feray! La piece d'embas

⁴³ As Knight puts it, cf. 'Uses of Rhetoric', p. 76.

En riant me faisoit la moue.
Se plus a moy elle se joue,
Je luy donray ung coup de lance! (lines 2208–15)

[Good day to you! May you all get the pox! Understand what I mean? I can't stop laughing! I've seen, but I'll say no more. Or maybe I will! My nether piece is laughing at me and pulling faces. If she makes fun of me any more, I'll run her through with my spear!]

The linguistic register of this speech is best appreciated in conjunction with the elevated tones of the *Le Messagier*, whose 'official' lesson is expounded in the speech immediately following:

Or retenez, noble assistance,
Noz dictz en vostre entendement.
De nostre jeu la vraye substance
Vous avez veu evidamment.
Le Monde n'est que damnement,
De promettre c'est sa coustume,
Au besoing vous laissez en torment,
Langoureux et plein d'amertume.
Mais les biens faictz a sauvement
Maintenant Chascun a l'altitonne. (lines 2216–25)⁴⁴

[Noble audience, remember what we've been saying. You have witnessed the true meaning of our play: the World is to be condemned; it is in its nature to promise you everything and then to leave you in torment, languishing, and full of bitterness. But good works bring Everyman to salvation.]

If in this exchange with *Le Messagier* the Sot appears to have reverted to the sinner's incorrigible folly, the shift of tone serves to remind us of the fool's dual significance as both clown and critic, a notion doubtless derived, as Newels has pointed out, from St Paul (I Corinthians 1. 20–21, 27) and the holiness of the fool who could be wiser than wisdom itself.⁴⁵ For in much of the rest of the action of this play we have seen the Fool not just on the periphery of the action, but sometimes more directly and meaningfully involved in it: he supervises the revelries

⁴⁴ The close conjunction of 'high' and 'low' styles for comic effect may also be seen in the *Moralité de Charité* where, immediately following the initial homily, the prologue introduces Le Fol, whose contrasting prattle initiates the action: 'Si vous supplye humblement | Que vous nous donnez patience, | Et vous verrez presentement | Beau jeu, puisque le Fol commence' (I humbly beg you to be patient and you will soon see some good entertainment, since the Fool will begin) (*ATF*, III, 339–40).

⁴⁵ Margarete Newels, 'Le fol dans les moralités du moyen âge', *Cahiers de l'Association Internationale des Etudes Françaises*, 37 (1985), 23–38 (p. 23).

that take place — in dumbshow — in the tavern; just as he will later officiate at Chacun's burial where, in the absence of a priest, it is he who intones the Jobian sentence: 'Terre estoit, terre tournera' (Dust he was, to dust he will return). He will provide similar significant comment at other points in Chacun's moral drama: his initial temptation by Le Monde, his illnesses, his death, his resurrection on the day of judgement. A characteristic feature of his utterance — in this play as elsewhere — is the proverb, that vehicle of popular wisdom that will convey the message in a manner less elevated but no less effective. It is the 'sot' who reminds Chacun of the fickle ways of the world (Le Monde) with the proverb 'Huy rire et puis demain pleurer' (laugh today, weep tomorrow, line 1110), just as earlier *Maladie*, sent by La Mort, has used the same formula to remind Chacun of the imminence of his death — 'Telle huy rit qu'est demain morte' (Who laughs today is dead tomorrow, line 544) — pointing up a clear connection between his folly and his demise. But Chacun has failed to heed, preferring to indulge in the sins of the flesh offered by Le Monde, and encouraged by the singing and dancing organized by the Fool, activities that are usually associated with folly in these plays.

Similar associations between folly, sin, and death may be seen in *Le Lymon et la Terre*, a play that illustrates well the range of dramatic possibilities afforded to dramatists by the ambiguity of the fool's commentary. This morality traces the cradle-to-grave journey of Chacun, who, encouraged by Le Fol, prefers the path of sinful Monde to that of Raison. At first Le Fol is part of the fictional action taking place on stage, for it is as a court jester that he joins the princely circle of Monde, together with Orgueil (as 'maître d'hôtel'), Luxure (as secretary), Avarice (as treasurer). The text suggests (lines 161–62) that Le Fol has been recruited from amongst the audience, a sign of the folly of the world in a play in which Raison is the one who plays the contrasting role of official expositor. For most of the play Le Fol highlights the sinful nature of Chacun: Le Monde's retinue established, the fool will not only associate with the three vices — with all that that implies; he will also hover at the side of the naked Chacun, exhorting him to abandon Reason and live it up with Le Monde and his associates, pointing out to him 'Qu'ung fol conseille bien un saige' (A fool can teach a wise man, line 522), an evocation in proverb form of I Corinthians 1. 27: *sed quae stulta sunt mundi elegit Deus, ut confundat sapientes* (but God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise). With the assistance of Liesse (Delight), the Fool will organize the banquet that highlights the unrestrained gaiety of the fool (jokes, business with props and costumes, asides to the audience, song and dance), mingled with the culpability of folly that is never far away. Finally, changing sides, he will chide Chacun for failing to realize 'Qu'au monde n'estoit qu'abus' (There is nothing but deceit

in this world, line 1172). The Raison/Fol duo here dramatically symbolizes that wisdom/folly opposition whereby madness serves as a symbol of moral folly, as Margarete Newels has noted.⁴⁶ In the *memento mori* context of *Le Lymon et la Terre*, in which the figure of La Mort inevitably plays a prominent role, the Fool thus fulfils a key function: in opposition to Reason, he can accuse Chacun of folly precisely because he has refused to accept the redemption offered to him. He may, on one level, be a *bouffon de cour*, but he also has the capacity to tell the truth that is here exploited to good effect. At the end, however, the fool will give way to his counterpart, Raison, who will turn towards the spectators the play's most significant prop — the mirror that Chacun, throughout his journey of life, has been too terrified to look into — and invite them to contemplate their common destiny:

Mirez vous y, jeunes et vieulx,
 Et pensez bien tost a loysir
 Pourquoi [ne] devés orgueillir,
 N'estre avers ne luxurieux,
 Parresseux ne aussi envieux,
 Car nul de vous n'a avantage.
 Vecy de trestous l'eritage,
 C'est La Terre et Le Limon,
 Ou tous sans faillir pourrisson. (lines 1254–62)

[Look at yourselves in this mirror, young and old, and at your leisure contemplate why it is that you should avoid Pride, Avarice, Lust, Sloth, and Envy; for you will profit by none of them. This is the inheritance of us all: Earth and Clay, to which we shall surely all return.]

This evocation of Job 7. 13–16, on which the play seems largely to be based, could not be more stark — but it is a lesson made all the more telling by the fool's contrasting commentary.

A further illustration of the ambiguous nature of the fool as an expositor figure can be seen in the *Moralité des Enfants de Maintenant*, where the combination of popular entertainer with the wise expositor of the folly of others is effectively conceived. From the outset, the Fol establishes a certain complicity with the spectators by means of his lewd tales, larded with scatological allusions and risqué jokes, all designed no doubt to appeal to an audience of pupils and parents whose boredom threshold may not have been especially high. His patter certainly marks a sharp contrast with the high-flown utterances of such personifications as Bon Advis and Instruction. But the fool here is not just on the periphery of the action,

⁴⁶ Newels, 'Le fol dans les moralités', p. 32.

commenting to the audience; he also at times engages with characters within the play in ways that are both meaningful and entertaining. In the early stages much of his practical function is to elaborate the pilgrimage metaphor, sometimes by filling in with his babble the spaces needed by the players to travel through the various stages of their journey. As the action unfolds, however, this clownish madness gives way to a sharper critical perspective on the behaviour of the two brothers, notably of Finet who, at the high moral point of the action, is hanged on Perdicion's gallows. It is precisely at this moment that the Fol turns into a preacher figure who directly addresses his audience in order to point up the penitential message:

Il s'estoit trop en eux fié,
Quant ilz luy promettoient du bien.
Estes vous telz, enfans Jabien,
Desespoir, Luxure et Honte? (*ATF*, III, 70)

[He'd put too much faith in them when they promised him wealth. Are you all like him, the children of Jabien, Despair, Lust, and Shame?]

It is this mix of comic jester and intelligent expositor that best explains the fool's contribution in these plays to that 'communion' between players and spectators that is so distinctive a feature of medieval dramaturgy. As Henri Rey-Flaud has put it, the function of the Fool is to

Remettre sans cesse en question l'affabulation dramatisante, parodiant les moments capitaux de l'action, et travestissant les thèmes. Ainsi les spectateurs ne sont plus que des 'voyants passifs' d'une action qui se déroule inexorablement et ne les concerne pas. Ils entrent en complicité avec le Fou et s'imbriquent dans la trame du drame.⁴⁷

[bring into question the dramatic framework by parodying the key points of the action and by distorting its themes. In this way the audience become more than just 'passive spectators' of an action that is taking place beyond their control. Rather they are in collusion with the fool and are closely linked to the fabric of the play.]

The corpus of French *moralités*, perhaps more than any other category of plays of the later Middle Ages, is marked by a variety of tones and features, moulded as the plays were by religious and social conditions that spanned a long period of cultural change. One constant, however — whether plays belong to the central core of what Helmich calls the 'moralités religieuses', or whether they are more hybrid in

⁴⁷ Rey-Flaud, *Le cercle magique: essai sur le théâtre en rond à la fin du moyen âge* (Paris: Gallimard, 1973), p. 288.

nature — is their markedly 'expository' tone. The frequent insistence on both verbal and visual 'demonstration' in the texts suggests the influence, as I have tried to show elsewhere,⁴⁸ of a long tradition of penitential narratives, of which indeed some plays were direct adaptations 'par personnages',⁴⁹ witness their use of moralizing topoi such as the journey of life or the Prudentian *Psychomachia* that permit a lively dramatization of man's soul as a moral battleground. The presence of characters whose function it is to explain the significance of the moralizing mirror that is being held up to audiences may also occasionally put one in mind of the explanatory verses that accompanied the sometimes complex allegorical agendas of the tableaux vivants exhibited at royal entries. This narrative dimension is most evident in texts published for an armchair audience where L'Acteur outlines for the reader the 'moral' that lies behind the story being performed, as in the *Moralité de Pyramus et Thisbé* (Angers, 1535):

Par Pyramus on peult entendre
Le filz de Dieu, j'en suis certaine,
Et par Tisbee l'ame humaine.⁵⁰

[Pyramus signifies the son of God, of that I am certain; and by Thisbé, we understand the human soul.]

Bordier defines the verb 'moraliser' as 'transposer un texte, une histoire, dans un registre différent pour en développer les significations latentes' (transposing a text, a story, into a different register, in order to develop their underlying meanings).⁵¹ Such levels of meaning, whether they related to matters theological or satirical, obviously sometimes required a degree of exegesis, and thus raise the question of the purely practical need for explanation for a socially mixed urban audience, as well as a degree of delicacy in periods of religious turmoil, when the authority and interpretation of the word was crucial. Can we perhaps detect a hint of this

⁴⁸ A. Hindley, 'Les vii pechie mortel: Dramatizing Sin in the Old French *moralité*', *Romance Studies*, 32 (1998), 21–32.

⁴⁹ See for instance two of the earliest surviving examples: *La Moralité des sept péchés mortels* (based on the fourteenth-century *Miroir de Vie et de Mort* by Philippe de l'Omme); and *La Moralité du Pèlerinage de la Vie Humaine* (a 'scissors-and-paste' dramatization of a section of De Guilleville's celebrated poem); see *Mystères et moralités*, ed. by Cohen, pp. 39–77 and 91–130 respectively.

⁵⁰ 'Moralité nouvelle de Pyramus et Tisbee, publiée d'après l'exemplaire de la Bibliothèque Royale de Dresde', ed. by E. Picot (Paris: H. Leclerc, 1901). Extract of *Bulletin du Bibliophile* (January, 1901). Cf. also the anonymous *L'Enfant prodigue*, referred to above (note 23).

⁵¹ Bordier, 'Le Moyen Age', p. 84.

question of an audience's understanding of allegory in the remark by Confession in *Bien Advisé Mal Advisé*: 'Il souffit croire grossement | A gens de rude entendement, | Car savoir ne pouvez mie | Les subtilités de clergie' (Helmich, I, 42; It is enough for people of basic intelligence to comprehend in broad terms, since they cannot be expected to understand things as subtly as the clergy)? We may tend to think from a modern-day perspective that late medieval audiences were better equipped to 'interpret' the allegorical mode than we are today. But can we be so sure that this was true of all social categories? As we have noted earlier, the question has certainly been posed by Joël Blanchard regarding the level of biblical and historical understanding enjoyed by townsfolk as they gazed at the tableaux vivants at a princely entry, recalling, for instance, the difficulty experienced by Jean Froissart in getting to grips with the *moralitez* staged at the entry into Paris in 1389 of Isabeau de Bavière.⁵²

This purely practical consideration may in part explain the sometimes aggressively expository mode that is such a feature of the *moralités*, a reminder to some commentators of the place of this corpus at the confluence of narrative and dramatic traditions.⁵³ Strongly narrative features indeed frequently do seem to come to the fore in the case of those religious allegories encountered by the Everyman figure, to whom they relate at length their meaningful narratives. Similarly, in some of the historical plays of the Rhétoriciens — those of a George Chastelain for instance — the line-up of personifications can sometimes produce a largely static presentation, with little in the way of movement or spectacle.⁵⁴

Yet it is in the nature of allegory to make the abstract concrete, and so whenever an allegorical personification appears in a play, its significance often demands explanation, which in some plays can be elaborately forthcoming. What the desk-bound critic sometimes forgets, however, faced with these often prolix texts, is that such expository functions can be served just as effectively — and certainly more dramatically — not by 'talking heads' alone, but by visual elaboration in performance, where business, costumes, props, music can speak more than just words.

⁵² Blanchard, 'Le spectacle du rite', p. 493.

⁵³ See Claude Thiry, 'Débats et moralités dans la littérature française du XV^e siècle: intersection et interaction du narratif et du dramatique', in *La langue, le texte, le jeu: perspectives sur le théâtre médiéval. Actes du colloque international. Université McGill, Montréal, 2–4 octobre, 1986*, ed. by G. di Stefano and R. M. Bidler (Montréal: CERES, 1986), pp. 203–44.

⁵⁴ See Estelle Doudet, 'Un dramaturge et son public au XV^e siècle: George Chastelain', *European Medieval Drama*, 9 (2005), 61–86 (p. 73).

As so often, evidence of staging is tantalizingly scarce in this area, yet a careful reading of the texts can help us to appreciate the plays' insistence on the inter-relationship of visual and verbal demonstration; not just 'saying', but also 'showing'. 'Oyez comment la moustreraie', concludes L'Hermite of the *Moralité des sept péchés mortels*, 'Et en monstrant si le diraie [...] | Et puit de la mort remembrance avoir | Par ces demostrance'⁵⁵ (Listen to how I will show it to you [...] and as I show it I will also say it, so that by these demonstrations you will then be mindful of death). Evidence of preachers whose sermons were delivered in conjunction with (para)dramatic illustration is increasingly forthcoming.⁵⁶ In this context there can be no better testimony to the value of visual exposition of the Christian message than that of Jean Germain, Bishop of Nevers in the 1460s. Frustrated that his ministry of the word lacked the fire of immediacy, Bishop Jean proposes to commission a set of tapestries, one of which will depict 'le grant empeschement et trouble que font continuellement l'ennemy d'enfer, la char et le monde' (the great obstacle and difficulty that our three enemies, the world, the flesh, and the devil, constantly put in our way), and for the very good reason that 'plus servent à congnoissance de peuple faiz et euvres que paroles et autorités d'escriptures'⁵⁷ (when it comes to instructing people, deeds and actions are more effective than words or quotations from scripture). These sentiments echo the remarks of the august Docteur of the *Moralité du Jour Saint Antoine*, with which play we began our discussion, as he paraphrases some words of St Gregory, *Magis movent exempla quam verba*:

Choses par exemples monstrees
Meuvent et sont plus a memoire
Que paroles tantost passees.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ *Mystères et moralités*, ed. by Cohen, p. 77 (lines 2533–42).

⁵⁶ For a recent discussion of the relationship between preaching and drama in Spain, see Francisc Massip and Lenke Kovacs, 'Les Franciscains et le genre macabre', *European Medieval Drama*, 8 (2004), 91–105 (pp. 92–93).

⁵⁷ Quoted by Achille Jubinal, *Les anciennes tapisseries historiées ou collection des monuments les plus remarquables de ce genre qui nous soient restés du moyen âge à partir du XI^e siècle au XVI^e siècle inclusivement* (Paris: Galerie d'armes de Madrid, 1838), pp. 65–72. Whether the tapestries were ever produced is not known.

⁵⁸ *Deux moralités inédites*, ed. by Bossuat and Bossuat, p. 31 (lines 62–64). For a fine study of the significance of this comment in relation to morality drama, see J.-P. Bordier, 'Magis movent exempla quam verba: une définition du jeu théâtral dans la *Moralité du Jour Saint Antoine*', in *Le Jeu théâtral, ses marges, ses frontières*, ed. by J.-P. Bordier (Paris: Champion, 1999), pp. 91–104.

[Things that are illustrated by means of plays are more moving and more memorable than words, which are soon forgotten.]

If the function of the *mystère* was essentially commemorative, that of the *moralité*, born of a long tradition of homiletic penitential narratives, was primarily didactic, their fictions dramatized exempla designed to provide moral guidance for spectators in their Christian journey. In a sermon, the preacher would use such exempla to illustrate and develop his message, making it easier for the audience to remember, and also, no doubt, to sugar the potentially bitter didactic pill. In the transposition of such material into dramatic mode, the role of the preacher-figure, though no longer central, was still essential, not just for practical reasons to do with the interface of actors and audience within the performance space, but more crucially as a guide to how the performance was to be understood. Such interpretative functions are not confined to purely external commentary, however, and in plays that often rely on allegorical figures are apparent too in the personified sins or virtues that need to explain their significance to the real-life characters they encounter. And we have seen how some playwrights could produce quite subtle dramatic effects as they shift the perspective on the relationship between the moral world that is at the heart of plays and the practical everyday world of the spectators as reflected in the action. Some of the most telling of such effects we have seen in the popular character of the Fool, who seems to hover on the periphery of a play, sometimes part of the action as a figure of the culpable folly of Sinner, at other times offering his distinctive 'unofficial', low-style commentary to the audience, and thereby providing an entertaining counterpoint to the high-flown rhetoric of the moral allegories. We need to understand the extent and variety of this expository mode if we are properly to appreciate the French *moralité*, not as part of the naturalistic, mimetic dramatic tradition with which we are perhaps most at ease, but rather as expressions, 'par personnages', of some of the human, spiritual, and theological issues of the later Middle Ages.

ESTABLISHING AN EXPOSITOR'S ROLE: CONTEMPLACIO AND THE N.TOWN MANUSCRIPT

Peter Meredith

The problem in considering *Contemplacio* is to know what text is appropriately his. Add some or take some away and his role and character change. Unfortunately, a necessary preliminary to establishing *Contemplacio*'s text is establishing the existence of the play of which he is a defining part, and my first remarks are directed at the peculiar nature of the N.town manuscript and the compiler who created it.

I can think of no current scholarly edition of a medieval English text in which anyone has attempted to go back to present the text at a stage earlier than that represented by the surviving manuscripts. Why should one want to? And on what grounds, when the text as it appears in the manuscript represents a genuine contemporary form even if sometimes misunderstood and confused by contemporary scribes? To debate the superiority of one manuscript over another or one reading over another is the stuff of scholarship, but not to set aside the form in which the text has survived. This sounds too much like deleting the Christian elements in *Beowulf* and calling what is left a pagan epic. There may be a sense that some part of a text is not original, but, however certain someone may feel about it, it does not result in removal of the doubtful part. It is simply a stage that the text has gone through. We would be extraordinarily lucky to have the original form of a medieval text. And how would we know it was 'original'? And what is an 'original' form anyway? Is it the first form which the text took or the later, perhaps improved, stages of its development? These questions are commonplaces of every period, not simply the medieval one.

When we come to the N.town manuscript, we have an undoubted fifteenth-century manuscript, written, by and large, in a single hand, containing a series of biblical and apocryphal scenes, in a recognizable fifteenth-century dramatic form:

the typical English mystery cycle,¹ represented most clearly by the York Play. N.town is not, of course, exactly like York. It has a descriptive proclamation, for instance, that York has not, which hints that the production is intended for a fixed location not a processional one — a hint confirmed later in the text.² It is also different in that the location is not specific: 'N.town', that is, 'N' = 'Insert your own place of performance'. Nevertheless the form of a series of pageants telling the story of the world from creation to judgement is the same. The N.town manuscript is not a high quality production but it is a good workaday job, clear and, in the main, straightforward.³ There seems at first glance no more reason to question its form and to disrupt it than to question and disrupt York or Chester. But appearances can be deceptive. What we are recognizing is apparently what the main scribe of the manuscript, the compiler, wanted us to recognize. He had in the first place a series of pageants in front of him. Then finding or being given or having his attention drawn to dramatic pieces of a different kind telling different stories, composite plays as opposed to pageants, he momentarily set aside his pageants and attempted to tailor the texts of these plays to fit the pageant series.⁴

¹ This is how it is presented in the editions of the full text, from Halliwell's to Spector's. See *Ludus Coventriae, a Collection of Mysteries, formerly represented at Coventry on the Feast of Corpus Christi*, ed. by James Orchard Halliwell (London: Shakespeare Society, 1841); *Ludus Coventriae or The Plaie called Corpus Christi*, ed. by K. S. Block, Early English Text Society, ES, 120 (London: Oxford University Press, 1922); *The N-Town Play: Cotton MS Vespasian D.8*, ed. by Stephen Spector, 2 vols, Early English Text Society, SS, 11 and 12 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991). All three editions retain the compiler's numbering and division of pageants, and the latest of them emphasizes the unity of the text by the use of 'Play' rather than 'Plays' in the title. All references to N.town outside the *Mary Play* and the *Passion Play* are to the Spector edition. The confusion with the plays of Coventry had been resolved by the time of Block's edition, but she retained *Ludus Coventriae* as a generic title (p. vi).

² *N-Town Play*, 1, 17, line 399; 'oure pleyn place' implies a single fixed location. See some useful discussion of this in Alan H. Nelson, 'Some Configurations of Staging in Medieval English Drama', in *Medieval English Drama: Essays Critical and Contextual*, ed. by Jerome Taylor and Alan H. Nelson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972), pp. 116–47; and Anne Cooper Gay, 'The "Stage" and the Staging of the N-Town Plays', *Research Opportunities in Renaissance Drama*, 10 (1967), 135–40.

³ There is a complete facsimile in *The N-Town Plays, a Facsimile of British Library MS Cotton Vespasian D VIII*, ed. by Peter Meredith and Stanley J. Kahrl, Leeds Texts and Monographs, Medieval Drama Facsimiles, 4 (Leeds: School of English, University of Leeds, 1977).

⁴ It is impossible to tell whether the compiler's treatment of the manuscript was under his own control or under the direction of someone else. For some discussion of his methods, see Alan J. Fletcher, 'The Design of the N-Town Play of Mary's Conception', *Modern Philology*, 79 (1981),

But he wouldn't be the first medieval compiler to do something like that. Why might one even so be tempted to try and dig below the surface and, going against the prevailing orthodoxy, present these plays as they might have been before he copied them into his manuscript? There seem to me to be two main reasons. The first is that though the main scribe has done a lot to make his newly compiled work appear a normal series of pageants, much of what he has done is window-dressing. And though he has, on the one hand, tried to conceal the disparities between his source texts and the cycle he is creating, he has, on the other, left clues as to the earlier form of these source texts.⁵ In other words his transformations are always incomplete, and recovering the earlier texts is in many cases a real possibility. This, as I have said elsewhere, is a manuscript in process of being made, not the finished article. The second reason is that the plays that lie just below the surface of the present N.town manuscript are what for English medieval drama are two unique dramatic pieces: the only surviving Passion Play and the only surviving play on the early life of Mary. For that reason alone it seems worthwhile not simply revealing the plays that lie beneath the compiler's text but also presenting them in their earlier forms.⁶ Which brings me to the play and to Contemplacio.

The play on the early life of Mary, which is defined by the appearances of Contemplacio, is made up of five episodes: the Conception of Mary; her Presentation in the Temple; her Marriage to Joseph; the Parliament of Heaven and the Annunciation; and the Visit to Elizabeth, or, as described by Contemplacio: 'here concepcon' (line 10), 'offryd into þe temple' (line 11), 'maryed to Joseph' (line 12), 'þe salutacyon' (line 12), and 'Metyng with Elyzabeth' (line 13). Contemplacio

166–73, and 'Layers of Revision in the N-Town Marian Cycle', *Neophilologus*, 66 (1982), 469–78; Peter Meredith, 'Scribes, Texts and Performance', in *Aspects of Early English Drama*, ed. by Paula Neuss (Cambridge: Brewer, 1983), pp. 13–29, and 'Manuscript, Scribe and Performance: Further Looks at the N.town Manuscript', in *Regionalism in Late Medieval Manuscripts and Texts: Essays Celebrating the Publication of 'A Linguistic Atlas of Late Medieval English'*, ed. by Felicity Riddy (Cambridge: Brewer, 1991), pp. 109–28; Stephen Spector, 'The Composition and Development of an Eclectic Manuscript: Cotton Vespasian D VIII', *Leeds Studies in English*, 9 (1977), 62–83 and the appendices to his edition, *N-Town Play*, II, 537–54.

⁵ The clearest example of this is the presence of the red dots within the bowl of the paraphs at the beginning of stanzas indicating that the source of the text is the *Mary Play*. See Fletcher, 'Layers of Revision', pp. 477 (n. 13) and 478 (n. 19); Meredith, 'Manuscript, Scribe and Performance', p. 117; *N-Town Play*, II, 539.

⁶ I have attempted to do this in my editions of the *Mary Play from the N.town Manuscript* (Exeter: Exeter University Press, 1997) and the *Passion Play from the N.town Manuscript* (London: Longman, 1990). All references to the *Mary Play* are to the former edition.

himself apparently makes six appearances. At the very beginning (1), after introducing the whole play, he sketches out the five episodes described above, but without mentioning the Parliament of Heaven. On his next appearance (2), he bridges the gap between the Conception and Presentation, mentioning Mary's birth in passing. Then (3), he rounds off the Presentation and introduces the Marriage, and also, unusually, looks forward to the fourth episode, the Annunciation, mentioning the Parliament for the first time. He appears in a new guise before the Annunciation (4), sets the scene for the Visit (5), and rounds the whole play off at the end of that episode (6). As the introducer, expositor, continuity man, and concluder of what has come to be known as the *Mary Play*, and therefore the character that binds the five episodes together and creates the play's individual integrity, Contemplacio must have been an embarrassment to the N.town compiler wanting to give the impression of a series of separate pageants. Yet, despite some indications that he originally intended to leave Contemplacio out,⁷ Contemplacio still appears in the present manuscript, apparently in his *Mary Play* positions. Though submerged in the series of pageants, it is therefore still quite clear that the *Mary Play* was once a separate unit.

The group of episodes then, because it is contained by Contemplacio, implies a play, one unique in its subject matter in medieval English drama and therefore one crying out to be extracted from its, in some ways inappropriate, surroundings. But though much of it can be easily extracted, some is interwoven with the surrounding pageants and some is missing. This affects Contemplacio in two ways. Because I am concerned not only with what he says in his own speeches but also with how he interrelates with the episodes his speeches introduce and comment on, I need

⁷ In the manuscript this shows most clearly at Contemplacio's first appearance, fol. 37^v. The recto of fol. 37 contains the last twenty lines of the preceding pageant, the Tree of Jesse. According to the N.town Proclamation this should be followed by the two-part pageant of the Marriage of Mary, leading on to the Annunciation. It is now followed by the Conception episode from the *Mary Play*. In the N.town manuscript, pageants are often divided from each other by a blank — sometimes a page, sometimes more, sometimes less, depending where on the page the previous pageant ends. One might expect the verso of fol. 37, therefore, to be blank, with the next pageant following on fol. 38^r. This could have been the scribe's first intention, as the next episode does indeed begin on fol. 38^r. But it appears that he later changed his mind and altered the opening of the episode by inserting the Contemplacio speech on the blank page of fol. 37^v. There is no way of proving this but there are one or two indications. Ysakar's speech, at the beginning of the Conception episode, opens with a large red capital 'T', and his name is written in a slightly larger script and preceded by a red capitulum. All this looks like the opening of a pageant. What alters that effect is the later insertion of the large red '8', the pageant number, next to the opening of Contemplacio's speech on fol. 37^v.

to know to what extent I can be certain that the text of his own speeches and also the text of the episodes are actual *Mary Play* text. I should make it clear here that I am attempting to go back to the play that existed immediately before it was copied into the present manuscript, the compiler's copy-text, not to some theoretical 'original'. This raises another problem. There is little doubt that the play was already changing and developing before it was copied and adapted for the N.town manuscript. Distinguishing between changes that had already taken place and ones made by the compiler in absorbing it into the pageant series is not always easy. The major adaptations, and the ones that can be most easily disentangled, are those that affect the Marriage, where the compiler had to decide between using pageant text and using *Mary Play*. These only affect Contemplacio incidentally, however, and they have been dealt with fully elsewhere.⁸ What I want to turn to here are the problems affecting Contemplacio's first three speeches, and to look at them in some detail.

Metrically, the first two appearances that Contemplacio makes consist of octaves, two and one respectively, rhyming *ababbcb* (the typical stanza form of the *Mary Play*), and a single nine-line stanza which looks like a truncated version of the thirteen-line stanza that is characteristic of the pageant series. Not only is there a metrical division, however, but, matching it, the subject matter of the speeches seems to conclude with the end of the octaves and then start again with the nine-line stanzas. In his first speech (1), for example, Contemplacio describes the episodes to follow, ending with

þat it xulde nat be tedyous
To lernyd nyn to lewd, nyn to no man of reson.
Pis is þe processe; now preserve 3ow, Jhesus! (*Mary Play*, lines 14–16)

This certainly sounds like a conclusion. But it is followed by:

Perffore of pes I 3ow pray all þat ben here present,
And tak hed to oure talkyn, what we xal say. (lines 17–18)

Which sounds to me like restarting. More or less the same is true of his second appearance (2):

Pis sentens sayd xal be hire begynnyng.
Now þe modyr of mercy in þis be our sped!
And as a childe of thre 3ere age here she xal appere
To alle pepyl þat ben here present; (lines 260–63)

⁸ See, for example, Fletcher, 'Layers of Revision', pp. 472–74; Meredith, 'Manuscript, Scribe and Performance', pp. 115–16.

In both cases what is contained in the final stanza adds something, but nothing that is essential, to what has already been said. In the first it adds a request for silence and attention and a prayer; in the second it adds detail: Mary was three years old, she lived holily and stayed in the temple till she was fourteen — none of which the audience needs to know since it will all shortly be made clear. On his third appearance (3), before the Marriage, the metrical pattern varies slightly but not significantly from the earlier ones. Instead of *Mary Play* octaves there are two quatrains (a not infrequent feature of the play) preceding the usual nine-line stanza. This time, however, the final stanza is not superfluous. The information contained in it is essential for the introduction of the next episode, the Marriage, and for the one following, the Parliament of Heaven and Annunciation:

Hath pacyens with vs we besech 3ow her,
 And in short spas
 The Parlement of Hefne sone xal 3e se,
 And how Goddys sone com man xal he;
 And how þe salutacyon aftere xal be,
 Be Goddys holy gras. (*Mary Play*, lines 588–93)

The immediate question here is, If these are revisions, as they seem to be, are they part of the compiler's exemplar, or are they changes that he himself made when he copied the *Mary Play* into the new manuscript?⁹ In general, if I am right in saying that the compiler was not at first intending to include Contemplacio in his new text, then it is unlikely that he would have bothered with revising the texts of his speeches. If, on the other hand, having decided to include him he saw a way of blending him better into the pageants by making alterations, he might well have done so. The alterations in question, however, seem to have nothing to do with blending pageants and play episodes. They are more concerned with making links within the group of episodes (i.e. the play). Though the final stanzas of the first and second of Contemplacio's appearances seem like restarts, there is no problem theatrically in making them work. A change of tone or a change of direction to another part of the audience would effectually remove any potential awkwardness.

Considering them as revisions within the play, why might they have been made? In view of the necessary information contained in the final stanza of Contemplacio's speech at his third appearance (necessary in view of his invariable habit of introducing the next episode, or in this case more necessary because it is the one *after* the next), it seems likely that it is there that an explanation lies.

⁹ For other discussion of these sections, see Fletcher, 'Layers of Revision', pp. 470–71, and Spector, 'Composition and Development', pp. 69–71.

Many have thought that the Parliament of Heaven is an addition to an earlier form of the *Mary Play*, simply because it is not part of his initial list of episodes but is announced only in this stanza.¹⁰ If this is so then the whole series of added nine-line stanzas could be the result of a reviser's leading into the new episode. Once having added this new stanza form as a conclusion of Contemplacio's third speech introducing the Parliament, he extended the pattern back through the first two appearances. The nine-line stanzas and the Parliament, then, may well have been part of a single revision and part of the compiler's exemplar.

The next appearance of Contemplacio (4), before the Parliament of Heaven and the Annunciation, is the one which has given rise to most discussion since not only does his character change, he no longer appears as a simple expositor but as a character in the play, but the manuscript suggests that this single character was once two.¹¹ The first question, therefore, is whether we should consider this speech (or these stanzas) to be Contemplacio's at all. The situation in the manuscript seems to have developed in the following way. Initially, when the compiler was copying out these stanzas on fol. 58^v (Figure 11), he indicated a division between the second and the third by placing a guide letter, the number '2', above the first letter of the first word of the third stanza. When he came to rubricate later, he followed the intention indicated by the guide letter and placed a red '2' in the left margin, corresponding to the red '1^{us}' at the head of the first stanza. When he added 'Contemplacio' (somewhat squashed in on the right at the head of the page), either after or, more likely, before he added the rubrication, he did not cancel the earlier attributions. What are we to make of this? The numbers clearly divide the four stanzas into two groups of two, in direct contradiction to a single four-stanza speech for Contemplacio, and the most likely explanation is that they represent two speakers. Because they are simply numbers and because the compiler does not usually place a speaker's name in the left margin, it is possible that he did not understand the significance of them and simply copied them from his exemplar, then, seeing no apparent speaker's name, he supplied 'Contemplacio' at the top of the page. Or, to look at it another way and to credit

¹⁰ See, for example, *Ludus Coventriae*, ed. by Block, pp. xxii–xxiii; Fletcher, 'Layers of Revision', p. 474; Spector, 'Composition and Development', p. 70.

¹¹ The first to draw attention to this was W. W. Greg in 'Bibliographical and Textual Problems of the English Miracle Cycles. IV. *Ludus Coventriae*', *The Library*, 3rd Series, 5 (1914), 365–99 (pp. 381–82). It has since been discussed by Alan J. Fletcher, 'The "Contemplacio" Prologue to the N-Town Play of the Parliament of Heaven', *Notes and Queries*, 27 (1980), 111–12, and Spector in *N-Town Play*, II, 452.

the compiler with some dramatic sense, he realized the striking effect to be gained, overrode the copy-text attribution of them to two speakers, and gave the stanzas to Contemplacio. But why did he leave the numbers in? The answer no doubt lies in his tendency to leave indications of the previous state of the text in his newly copied version, and the numbers reflect the situation, with or without the Contemplacio attribution, that he found in the source text.

If this is so, who were the speakers of the two speeches? Two pairs have been favoured: a representative or representatives of the patriarchs and prophets, and a representative or representatives of the angels and archangels. Spector sums up the evidence for the former:¹² the words are 'spoken from the perspective of earth-dwellers' (e.g. lines 1074, 1076, 1090), reference is made later to prophets making supplication (lines 1094 and 1115), and in 'several analogues, prophets and angels utter laments'. To take the first of these, the perspective of earthdwellers, the speeches refer to 'com(e) down(e)' (lines 1069, 1091), 'here into erth' (line 1069), 'vesyte vs' (line 1074), 'woo to vs' (line 1076), 'oure hed' (line 1089), which sounds like an earthly, human perspective. This is certainly true, but whose voices are we hearing? It is made clear at lines 1066 and 1084 that the words of Isaiah and Jeremiah are being quoted by the speakers. And even where the words are not said to be quotation, some of them are. The first two lines of the second speech, beginning 'A, woo to vs wrecchis of wrecchis be', are, for example, from Jeremiah, even though he is not mentioned until nine lines later. There is, in other words, no strict division between the quoted words of the prophets and those of the speakers.¹³ The speakers are *conveying* the words and attitudes of these two prophets, making supplication on their behalf, and through them for mankind. As the *Virtutes* point out in the speech following the two debated ones: 'Oure offyse [the office of the angels] is to presente here ['their', i.e. the patriarchs' and prophets'] prayerys to the ['thee', i.e. God]' — which seems to be exactly what the characters in the two previous speeches have done. It might be described in exegetical terms not as 'Here the psalmist speaks in the voice of Christ at his Passion' but 'Here the angels speak in the voices of the patriarchs and prophets before the Incarnation'. It is also worth envisaging this moment in terms of costume. If one imagines actors costumed as angels speaking the first two speeches of this episode

¹² *N-Town Play*, II, 452.

¹³ The quotations are Isaiah 64. 1 (lines 1068–69); Jeremiah 45. 3 (lines 1076–77); Jeremiah 9. 1 (lines 1084–85); Lamentations 2. 13 (line 1088); Lamentations 5. 16 (line 1089). All are also quoted in the *Charter of the Abbey of the Holy Ghost (Yorkshire Writers: Richard Rolle of Hampole and his Followers)*, ed. by C. Horstmann, 2 vols (London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1895), I, 347–48).

on behalf of mankind, would there be any sense of incongruity, any clash between speech and speaker? I think not. It should be borne in mind, too, that the angels are intimately concerned with the salvation of mankind in as much as it will remedy the fall of the rebel angels and restore the angels' numbers. As the *Virtutes* say:

Lete þi mercy make hym with aungelys dwelle,
Of Locyfere to restore þe place. (*Mary Play*, lines 1106–07)

They are, emotionally, speaking in their own voices too.¹⁴ Finally, though in the *Charter of the Abbey of the Holy Ghost*, a work certainly related to the *Mary Play*, the prophets present their pleas in person, in the Nicholas Love version of the *Meditationes*, also related to at least parts of the *Mary Play*, it is the angels that plead. Furthermore, Gabriel, who speaks for the angels, is said by Love to have received 'speciale reuelacion of cristes Incarnacion in hir al name' (i.e. on behalf of all [the angels]),¹⁵ which fits well with the strangely prescient pleas of lines 1069–73 and 1080 of the *Mary Play*:

And com down here into erth,
And levyn 3erys thre and threttye,
Thyn famyt folke with þy fode to fede;
To staunche þy thyrsté lete þi syde blede,
For erste wole not be mad redempcyon. (lines 1069–73)

With þi blyssyd blood from balys hem borwe (line 1080)

It will be clear that I have finally come down on W. W. Greg's side that the speakers are the representatives of the angels.¹⁶ Many will no doubt still feel that the speeches are too earth-based for them to be the speakers, but it is worth remembering that there are a number of third-person references to 'Man' (e.g. lines 1061, 1065, 1079 ('þei'), 1080 and 1083 ('hem'), 1087 ('Here')) which though acceptable as the words of prophets or patriarchs nevertheless are particularly appropriate to a non-earthly group. If it is accepted that the speakers are angels then the words of the *Virtutes* at lines 1096–97, 'Aungelys, archaungelys, we thre, | Þat ben in þe fyrst ierarchie', would refer to the first three speakers of this episode; the most obvious division being angels (lines 1060–75), archangels (lines 1076–91), and

¹⁴ Giving the speeches to angels and archangels also makes sense of the *Virtutes* — the third of the angelic hierarchy as speakers of the third pair of stanzas. They, otherwise, seem an odd choice.

¹⁵ *Nicholas Love's 'Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ': A Critical Edition Based on Cambridge University Library Additional MSS 6578 and 6686*, ed. by Michael G. Sargent (New York: Garland, 1992), p. 14.

¹⁶ Greg, 'Bibliographical and Textual Problems', p. 382.

powers or *Virtutes* (lines 1092–1107), the three members of the first hierarchy of angels in the Gregorian system.¹⁷ The effect of this is to deprive Contemplacio of one of his most effective moments in the play. But if I were to revise my edition of the *Mary Play* now, that is what, with some reluctance, I would do.

There is one further point to be considered. Returning to Contemplacio's third speech (3), as I have already mentioned not only does he announce the episode which follows immediately afterwards, the Marriage, but unusually he also announces the episode which comes after that, the Parliament of Heaven and Annunciation. The most likely reason for introducing the later episodes at this point is that Contemplacio was not expected to appear again until he introduced the Visit to Elizabeth. In other words he was not expected to appear at the beginning of the Parliament of Heaven. Consequently it suggests that the attribution of the two-speaker speeches to Contemplacio was a later alteration, perhaps a last minute one by the compiler, and not one connected with the series of revisions that I have discussed in Contemplacio's first three speeches.

Contemplacio next appears (5) after the opening of the Visit to Elizabeth (fol. 71). Uniquely he does not open the episode but appears after it has started. As Mary and Joseph go round the place to Elizabeth and Zachary's scaffold, Contemplacio, using the words of *Legenda Aurea*,¹⁸ sets the scene for the next episode. If ever the compiler had doubts of including the expositor they have clearly evaporated by this stage.

Contemplacio's final appearance is different again. Here the compiler deliberately presents us with alternative endings, not only affecting the text of the episode but also that of Contemplacio himself. There are in fact three possible endings though only two are, as it were, offered. The implied ending (6a) leaves Contemplacio with a rather bare two stanzas explaining how the *Ave Maria* was put together and what it is worth to devotees, and providing a conventional rounding-off: apology for any shortcomings, prayer for the audience, and a cue for a musical finale. The offered alternatives are one that extends the visit of Joseph and Mary by leaving them at Elizabeth and Zachary's (6b), and another that cuts their visit short (6c). The first of these is indicated by a marginal sign on fol. 73^v leading, *si placet*, to an additional three lines at the foot of the page (Figure 12). This then leads into Contemplacio's speech of thirty-six lines, beginning with the analysis of the *Ave*

¹⁷ See note to line 1092sn in *Mary Play*, p. 107.

¹⁸ Compare Jacobus de Voragine, *Legenda Aurea*, ed. by Theodor Graesse, 3rd edn (Breslau, 1890), p. 357.

Maria, already mentioned, and going on to describe Joseph and Mary's stay, the birth of John the Baptist, the removal of Zachary's dumbness, the saying of the *Benedictus*, Joseph and Mary's departure, and Contemplacio's concluding remarks.¹⁹ The alternative (forty-four lines) contains the end of Joseph and Mary's visit, Elizabeth and Zachary's departure for the temple, and, as in the first, Contemplacio's analysis of the *Ave* and his concluding remarks but, obviously, without the narrative of Mary and Joseph's stay.²⁰ It is possible that the compiler accidentally forced the third ending onto himself by choosing to copy in as main text elements of two contradictory endings that were in front of him — one in which Mary and Joseph depart and one in which they stay behind. Noticing this, he perhaps decided that he had to offer a solution by side-tracking the main text with a lead-in to an alternative at the foot of the page (*si placet*). Probably neither was the original ending of the play. If we use the purely mechanical method of analysing stanza-forms and exclude anything in non-Marian stanzas, then the play ended with Elizabeth's explanation to Joseph of Zachary's dumbness, immediately followed by Contemplacio's analysis of the *Ave* and his concluding remarks (6a) — quite an abrupt ending. If this had been the ending then it is understandable that someone attempted to improve on it, rounding off Elizabeth's speech with the three concluding lines, and giving Contemplacio's speech a warmth that it lacks by including the full description of the circumstances of John the Baptist's birth (6b, as in the current edition of the *Mary Play*). Or, to take the alternative ending (6c), it is equally possible that for the same reason someone expanded the departure of Mary and Joseph for home and Elizabeth and Zachary for the temple and rounded off the play with Elizabeth's words, which project the meaning of the play forward in time and lift the ending onto another plane:

For now is cum mercy and venjauns is past:
 God wyl be born for mannys prow
 To brynge us to blysse þat ever xal last. (*Mary Play*, Appendix 3, lines 26–28)

The question as regards Contemplacio is whether his speech is to be simply analysis and conclusion, as perhaps it was originally, or analysis and, before concluding, something more human and more emotionally satisfying. As far as I am concerned the question remains open, but I suspect that the earliest form that the speech took was the former.

¹⁹ This is the ending given in the main text of the *Mary Play*, lines 1558–96.

²⁰ See *Mary Play*, Appendix 3, pp. 134–37.

But what did the compiler have in front of him when he came to copying this part of the *Mary Play* into his new manuscript? Did he have the alternative endings set out neatly and clearly as alternatives? Or were they merely scribbled possibilities on loose sheets of paper, perhaps given to him at the last moment? Or was he, the compiler, responsible for composing either of them? There is, sadly, no way of telling. The evidence of the manuscript suggests to me that they were available to him, but that they were not clearly set out, and that at first he decided or was asked to use only one of them. Then, at a late stage, he decided or was asked to include both. The evidence is this. His average of manuscript lines per page in this part of the manuscript is twenty-eight or fewer and the previous pages show no sign of an expected shortage of space until fol. 73^r. Each contains twenty-four lines or fewer, with no doubling-up of lines of text, until fol. 73^r which contains twenty-eight, with one doubled line. Fol. 73^v has thirty manuscript lines plus the three added at the foot — with doubling-up, making thirty-six text lines + three (Figure 12) — and fol. 74^r has thirty-one manuscript lines — with doubling-up, making fifty-two text lines + one stage direction (Figure 13). So by doubling-up the lines of text, the compiler crammed an exceptionally large number onto the final page, fol. 74^r, having already doubled up the lines at the foot of the previous page, fol. 73^v, and added an extra three lines in the margin at the foot of the page. This argues for a serious change of plan, most likely the addition of the second of the alternative endings, decided upon late in the copying process.

It will be apparent from what I have said that analysing Contemplacio's role in the *Mary Play* is not a straightforward task. There is no doubt about the existence of his first two appearances, though it is certainly possible that the text has been expanded. The only problem about his third appearance is its relationship to the episode which follows, largely made up of pageant text as it is. His next appearance, before the Parliament of Heaven, is doubtful. For the reasons outlined above, I now think that if we are trying to get as near as possible to the form of the *Mary Play* that the compiler was working from, then Contemplacio should not be given these stanzas. The attribution of the stanzas to him is likely to be a feature of the copying of the play into the new manuscript, not of the copy text. His fifth appearance, before the Visit to Elizabeth, is like the first two straightforward, and, as has been indicated, his final rounding-off presents three possibilities: the abrupt conclusion, the narrative of Mary and Joseph's stay, or the enacted departure.

Let me turn now to the effect of his presence on the play, and in the first instance to his name. It has been suggested that his name reflects the influence of popular religious devotion and that it perhaps derives from the frequent use of 'Contemplacio' in Love's *Mirror* to characterize that mode of devotion which

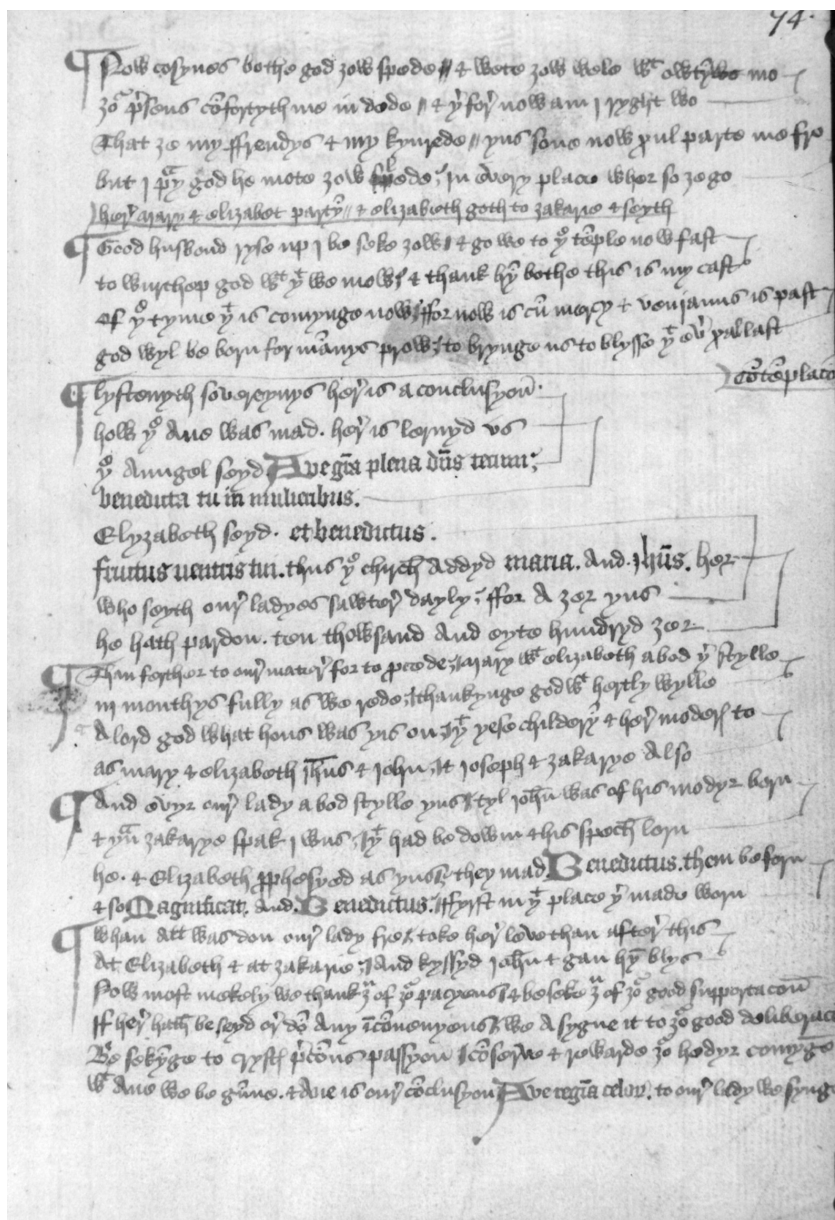


Figure 13. The final page of the Visit, London, British Library, Cotton MS Vespa-sian D VIII, fol. 74^r. The heavily doubled-up lines contrast with the expansive treatment of Contemplacio's analysis of the *Ave*; the latter, with the last stanza of all, is probably text common to all three endings. By permission of The British Library.

encourages the visual imagining of events in the lives of Christ and his mother.²¹ This seems to me entirely likely, but it should be remembered that at no point does Contemplacio reveal his name to the audience. He is not like Rumour, 'painted full of tongues', who not only riddlingly reveals his name in his costume but speaks it in the second line (2 *Henry IV*, Induction, sd and lines 1–2), or Time who whets the appetite to know who he is before the revelation comes (*The Winter's Tale*, IV. 1. 1–4). If his name is significant, it is so only to the writer and, perhaps, the performers. There are moments where the tone of his remarks might suggest the sort of contemplation common in Love's *Mirror*, but the most transparent of these, the description of the household of Elizabeth and Zachary, does not occur until his concluding remarks in one of the alternative endings, possibly in a passage of revision. It is true that the tone of the episodes themselves is very much that of the devotional work, so that there is an overall congruity between the name of the expositor and the episodes, but the audience is never given the opportunity of making the connection.

What of the tone conveyed by his words? As with many later prologues and choruses, like a storyteller he holds the story in his hands, but unlike them he doesn't add a frisson of excitement as he introduces an episode, as for example the Choruses of *Henry V* or of Marlowe's *Dr Faustus* do. It is very much factual information delivered by a slightly fussy, benevolent clergyman. He is concerned about things being badly put, from the point of view either of meaning or of delivery, depending how one understands lines 3–6 of his opening remarks. He is also concerned about clarity, and about time and being tedious. He carefully sets out the five parts of the play (lines 10–13), explains the absence of the presentation of Mary's conception and birth (line 256) and methodically introduces each episode. As for time and tediousness, the Presentation in the Temple is 'compiled breffly' (line 11), the conclusion is 'In fewe wurdys talkyd þat it xulde nat be tedyous | To lernyd nyn to lewd' (lines 13–14). Mary's conception and birth are passed over 'breffnes of tyme consyderynge' (line 257), and 'Tyme sufficyth not to make pawsacyon | Hath pacyens with vs we besech 3ou her [...] in short spas [...] sone' (lines 587–90), he says, before the Marriage. At first, there is also a sense of 'them and us' in the way in which he refers to the performers, though the opening 'þe personys here pleand' (line 3), 'here [their] sentens' (line 4), is

²¹ M. P. Forrest, 'The Role of the Expositor Contemplacio in the St Anne's Day Plays of the Hegge Cycle', *Medieval Studies*, 28 (1966) 60–76; Richard Beadle, "Devoute ymaginacioun" and the Dramatic Sense in Love's *Mirror* and the N-Town Plays', in *Nicholas Love at Waseda*, ed. by Shoichi Oguro, Richard Beadle, and Michael G. Sargent (Cambridge: Brewer, 1997), pp. 1–15.

mitigated a bit by 'oure talkyn, what *we* xal say' (line 18) — perhaps significantly in the probably interpolated stanza — and, as the play progresses, Contemplacio expresses himself more as one of a team of performers. His language, as so often with medieval expositors, is occasionally high-flown, a sprinkling of Latinate words and a convoluted syntax being the usual form it takes.²² He keeps his relationship with the audience on a formal level.

A number of comparisons seem worth pursuing here. First of all he is not the only expositor in N.town. His namesake provides the link between the first and second Passion Plays, and in this case, though once again the audience are not told his name, they are at least shown his role through his costume: *an exposytour in doctorys wede* (*Passion Play*, p. 89, line 1sd). He is more concerned than the *Mary Play* Contemplacio in instructing the audience in their role: 'kepe þe passyon in 3our mende' (line 8) and 'Besekyng 3ou for mede of 3our soulys to take good hede theratte' (line 20). 'Keeping the Passion in mind' is very much a part of ordinary contemplation. From the very beginning, the Passion Contemplacio allies himself with the performers — 'We intendyn [...] þat we lefte [...] we beseche [...] we shewyd' (lines 6–9) — and his language is straightforward. Despite the brevity of his role, the audience knows more about this Contemplacio than it does about his namesake simply because of his costume, yet the name really seems not to matter. His speech is twenty lines long and after it he is seen no more. His name is squashed in the right margin, almost as though it is an afterthought. Did the compiler simply think that Contemplacio was a convenient name for an expositor? The other expositor in N.town is named 'Doctor' and introduces the *Assumption Play*, a self-contained play not written by the compiler and with no doubts surrounding it (*N-Town Play*, pp. 387–409). Again no one is told the expositor's name, but the nature of his introduction is very much that of the clerkly scholar. He gives his source: 'a book clepid apocriphum' (line 4) written by 'Jhon the Euangelist' (line 3), and provides a calculation of Mary's age at the time of the Assumption according to his authority, the *Legenda Sanctorum*, which he cites (line 13). He goes on to describe her mode of life from the time of the Ascension (lines 14–23). His role is quite clear-cut but it is simply a prologue of twenty-five lines and he doesn't appear again. Both of these are very unlike Contemplacio especially in their brevity and in the fact that they do not contain the action.

²² E.g. 'oblocucion' (line 5), 'pawsacyon' (line 587), 'supportacyon' (line 1590), and, for syntax, see for example the rather unwieldy sentence making up the first stanza.

The most worthwhile comparison, it seems to me, is with Poeta in the *Conversion of St Paul*.²³ Poeta's role is much more like Contemplacio's. He remains incognito and contains the action by introducing and rounding off the play as well as appearing within the action to move it forward. Where Contemplacio stresses time, Poeta stresses skill. They are not, he says, rhetoricians (lines 355, 656–60); the real story is in the Bible, where the audience can read it (lines 10–11, 158–60, 352); the compiler has done his best, as he should, but he's open to correction (lines 356–59). As a result one is more aware of the story as an artful construct being presented to us as audience. Poeta's humility topos engages the audience, whereas Contemplacio's concern with time simply seems like worry. This is partly, I think, because Poeta has another part to play. He literally moves the audience from one station to another (lines 155–58, 354) so that his relationship with the audience becomes, almost by default, a much more personal one. Without the transformation to the passionate representative of humankind that once preceded the Parliament of Heaven, Contemplacio is little more than a cataloguer of episodes and an explainer of benefits.

But if Contemplacio loses, what of the play? In the second episode, Mary in the Temple, the play moves on to a different plane of existence, abstract and devout, a half-way house between earth and heaven. The Marriage necessarily moves towards earth again, but it is difficult to tell what the original tone would have been because there is so much intrusion of pageant text. Its *Mary Play* ending is, however, recoverable: Mary's devout reading and enthusiastic praise of the psalms, leading to her final reading of Psalm 84:

I haue seyde sum of my sawtere and here I am
At þis holy psalme indede:
Benedixisti domine terram tuam;
In this holy labore, Lord me spede! (lines 1026–29)

This is, of course, the psalm which forms the basis of the debate of the four daughters of God, the Parliament of Heaven. Mary's last words then lift the action again onto the heavenly plane and lead naturally into the pleas of the angels and the debate on the salvation of mankind. As Joseph leads Mary across to the house of the Annunciation, the angels appear to make their appeal. To my mind Contemplacio would, at this moment, be an intrusion into this other-worldly state. What is a diminution of the expositor's role is an enhancement of the play as a whole. It's a price I'd be willing to pay.

²³ *The Late Medieval Religious Plays of Bodleian MSS Digby 133 and E Museo 160*, ed. by Donald C. Baker, John L. Murphy, and Louis B. Hall, Jr, Early English Text Society, OS, 283 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), pp. 1–23.

BROUGHT TO BOOK: CHESTER'S EXPOSITOR AND HIS KIN

David Mills

Thanne was ther a wight with two brode eighen; [fellow]
Book highte that beaupeere, a bold man of speche.¹ [elder]

The personified figure of Book, as the Bible, appears suddenly in Passus 18 of Langland's poem between the unresolved dispute among the Daughters of God about the justice of Man's redemption and the effecting of that redemption in the Harrowing of Hell. The multivalent significance of Book's intervention at this key point of transition between the Old and New Laws has been fully investigated by R. E. Kaske, but his exposition offers little indication of the precedent that Langland might have found for this bold personification of a text.² Kaske points only to a Middle English metrical homily as presenting 'that homiletic semi-personification of the Bible which would appear to have provided the hint for Langland's fuller personification in Book',³ though the lines that he quotes offer little guidance:

The thrid gift thei him tok
Was a smerlis, *als said the bok* . . .
And sithen, *for al that boc maht sai* . . . (Kaske's italics)

[The third gift they gave him was an ointment, as the book said . . . and then despite what book might say . . .]

¹ *Piers Plowman*, B-Text, Passus 18, lines 229–30. Text in *William Langland: The Vision of Piers Plowman*, ed. by A. V. C. Schmidt, new edn (London: Dent, 1987).

² R. E. Kaske, 'The Speech of "Book" in *Piers Plowman*', *Anglia*, 77 (1959), 117–44.

³ Kaske, 'Speech of "Book"', p. 120.

What is clear is that Book paradoxically encompasses both the debate that precedes it in fictive past time and the Harrowing that follows it in fictive future time, both being in historical time to the reader, and that in turn it validates Langland's 'book' of *Piers Plowman*, giving it a necessary authority. In affirming the power of Christ, as recognized by all creation, it also affirms its own power as the divine record.

No playwright, to my knowledge, assigns Book its own character in his play, yet in both sixteenth-century York and Chester 'The Book' as agent of control against the potential anarchy of performance was an acknowledged presence, implicit if not actually visible. The 1554 record in the City Chamberlains' Books of York which refers to 'The ffurst place at the Trinitie yaites where the Clerke kepys the Regyster'⁴ suggests that the presence of the 'Register' as an instrument of control was known to all, even though its control was not always effective, as notes in the extant Register indicate.⁵

The evidence for Chester is less clear. The earliest record of its Corpus Christi Play, in 1422, refers some disputing companies to the Original (*secundum Originale*, 'according with the Original', i.e. the master-copy); and in 1572 the Puritan Christopher Goodman writes of 'their old originall'.⁶ There is no direct reference to someone monitoring the production in relation to the master text, but Goodman's complaint in 1572 that though the plays had been 'corrected' in the past, they were 'nor yet so played for the most part as they have been corrected'⁷ indicates that someone had been checking what was performed against the record of the corrected text. Company accounts for the plays in Chester are few, but usually include items such as that from the Painters' accounts of 1567–68: 'Item payd for Copping of oure orygenall xijd'. This is evidently different from the later entry in the same accounts: 'Item to him that Rydeth [reads] the orrygynall xijd'.⁸ It may be significant that the latter follows the payments to the players, suggesting

⁴ *Records of Early English Drama: York*, ed. by Alexandra F. Johnston and Margaret Rogerson, 2 vols (Toronto: University of Toronto Press; Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1979), 1, 313.

⁵ *The York Play: A Facsimile of British Library MS Additional 35290*, ed. by Richard Beadle and Peter Meredith, Medieval Drama Facsimiles, 7 (Leeds: School of English, 1983), pp. xxxiii–xl.

⁶ *Records of Early English Drama: Chester*, ed. by Lawrence M. Clopper (Toronto: University of Toronto Press; Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1979) [hereafter *REED: Chester*], pp. 6–7. Denbigh Record Office, Plas Power MSS DD/PP/839, pp. 119–20.

⁷ Denbigh Record Office, Plas Power MSS DD/PP/839, pp. 120–21. Copy of letter from Christopher Goodman and others to the Archbishop of York.

⁸ *REED: Chester*, pp. 82–83.

that 'rydyng' the play text occurred during the performance. Possible further light is shed by the entry in the Shoemakers' accounts for 1549–50: 'to the Reygenall beyrer [bearer] xijd'⁹ which suggests that he was the book carrier. His role may have been to ensure conformity to the Original or to prompt the actors, though the two functions are not exclusive. In some modern 'authentic' productions the prompter can be seen by the audience and, if we accept Philip Butterworth's assessment, in early theatre in some plays and some places the prompting was carried out in full view of the audience.¹⁰ But even if the book-carrier was not visible during performance, he would presumably be seen processing with the book, the symbol of authority and control, as the plays moved from station to station.

God, Author and Holder of the Book

As in N.town, Towneley, and York, Chester's first play assigns the opening speech to God. He begins by announcing to the audience that all things exist by His will throughout time:

Ego sum alpha et oo,	[I am alpha and omega]
primus et novissimus.	[the first and the last.]
It is my will it shoulde be soe;	
hit is, yt was, it shalbe thus. ¹¹	

Unlike other cyclic-openings, however, God continues, in a further thirty-one lines, to define His timeless nature to the audience, thus setting Himself outside the temporal structure of the 'Creation-Judgement' sequence. God is the author of both history and the biblical record of history which the plays will follow.

The director of a cycle play today has to decide whether to give God, or God the Father, a presence on stage throughout as spectator, as counterpart to the prompter, or even as 'divine' prompter Himself, even when no role is scripted for Him. In most modern Festival productions He remains in sight throughout. In the 1998 production of some York Plays, the actor playing God in 'Creation' appeared at ground level holding a book from which he cued the various scenic effects on the pageant-waggon. Though what I took to be a powerful dramatic device proved,

⁹ REED: *Chester*, p. 50.

¹⁰ Philip Butterworth, 'Prompting in Full View of the Audience: The Groningen Experiment', *Medieval English Theatre*, 23 (2002 [for 2001]), 122–71.

¹¹ *The Chester Mystery Cycle*, ed. by R. M. Lumiansky and David Mills, Early English Text Society, SS, 3 (London: Oxford University Press, 1974), p. 1, lines 1–4.

I later discovered, to be conceived merely as a safeguard against the actor forgetting his lines, the idea of God assuming in part the roles of author, prompter, and director is appealing and foregrounds his controlling role.¹² Like the Register in the hands of authority and acting-script in the hand of the prompter, God's presence guarantees order against the potential anarchy of the 'action' of history.

This would be true of any cycle, but is particularly the case in Chester, which balances the 'Prologue' of God by an 'Epilogue' at the end of its final play, 'The Last Judgement'. When the damned have been rushed into Hell and judgement is complete, a stage direction requires the four Evangelists to enter (*venient quatuor evangelistae*¹³) and assure the audience of the truth of what they have just witnessed, both the damnation of the sinful and the narrative of the life of their Saviour. St Luke, the evangelist to the Gentiles, states:

And I, Luke, on yearth lyvinge,
my lordes werkes in everythinge
I wrote and taught through my cunnyng
that all men knowe might.¹⁴ [knowledge]

And St John concludes the play and cycle with the accusatory speech to the audience:

And all that ever my lord sayth here,
I wrote yt in my mannere. [fashion, style]
Therfore, excuse you, withowten were, [truly]
I may not well, iwysse.¹⁵ [indeed]

Whether or not we imagine the four to be carrying their books, it is significant that the last play does not end simply with the fulfilment of God's will, as in York:

Nowe is fulfilled all my forboght,
For endid is all erthely thyng.
All worldly wightis þat I haue wrought,
Aftir þer werkis haue nowe wonnyng.¹⁶

[Now my first intent is completed, for every earthly thing is ended. All the people in the world that I have made now have their final dwelling according to their deeds.]

¹² David Mills, 'Acting the Text: York Mystery Plays in York, 12 July 1998', *Early Theatre: A Journal Associated with the Records of Early English Drama*, 1 (1998), 156–59.

¹³ *Chester Mystery Cycle*, ed. by Lumiansky and Mills, p. 462, line 676sd.

¹⁴ *Chester Mystery Cycle*, ed. by Lumiansky and Mills, p. 463, lines 693–96.

¹⁵ *Chester Mystery Cycle*, ed. by Lumiansky and Mills, p. 463, lines 705–08.

¹⁶ *The York Plays*, ed. by Richard Beadle, York Medieval Texts, 2nd series (London: Edward Arnold, 1982), p. 415, lines 373–76.

Instead, Chester ends by foregrounding the written authority, Book, and shielding the cycle against the potential scepticism of a projected sinful audience. Moreover, the effect of this direct address to the audience, in conjunction with God's opening speech, seems to encapsulate the Janus-like impact of the cycle's 'historical' action. The change from the will of God projected forward through time to the retrospective affirmation of events in written record induces a circularity of structure which holds the cycle together. The pattern of prophecy and its fulfilment runs through the cycle in a process of constant cross-reference, and actions are checked back through Latin quotation and direct biblical attribution to their source in the same Book which God is authoring at the start and to which we are referred at the end. The Book has, as it were, a voice within the text. The Evangelists may appropriately appear at the end clutching their gospels to give visual reinforcement to their claims, and God's book may have a visible presence in the hands of the Deity as He views and directs the action below. The audience is therefore made unusually aware of an action mediated by the play-book from the God-book, the Bible.

The Expositor as Reader, Abridger, and Summariser

Chester's playwright seems concerned to explore the interplay and boundaries of play world and real world. The cycle, unlike that of York, stresses the pastness of the past, an age of miracles which has been superseded by the enlightened world of the Reformed Church and the English Bible.¹⁷ Much of that past world has no relevance to the present and can be ignored, but there are significant interventions by God in directing human history which the cycle realizes. In some cases these require to be mediated to and explicitly interpreted for the audience. An agent for that interpretative process is a figure variously named 'Expositor' and 'Doctor'. This character appears in Plays 4 (Abraham), 5 (Balaam), 6 (Nativity), 12 (Temptation; Adulteress), and 22 (Prophets of Antichrist).

The MED defines 'Expositour' as '(a) One who explains or declares, an author or writer; (b) one who expounds the Gospel, a commentator'. The term is not well evidenced in classical Latin and was evidently a 'learned' term in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. John Bulloker included it in his 1612 collection of unfamiliar words, entitled *The English Expositor*, and glosses it as 'an expounder or interpreter'.¹⁸ The term is never used in the spoken play-text.

¹⁷ See my "The 'Now' of 'Then'", *Medieval English Theatre*, 22 (2001 [for 2000]), 3–12.

¹⁸ John Bullokar, *An English Expositor: 1612*, English linguistics 1500–1800: A Collection of Facsimile Reprints, 11 (Menston: Scolar Press, 1967).

The MED defines 'Doctour' as '1(a) One of the early Christian authorities on theology, a New Testament authority, one of the Church Fathers; 1(b) an expert in Jewish theology; - **oflaue**, an authority on the Mosaic Law; (c) a theologian, a learned clergyman; esp., one who has been awarded the title "doctor of divinity"'. It is applied in sense 1(a) to St Jerome in the unspoken Latin heading to the fifteen signs of the Last Judgement in Play 22, 'The Prophets of Antichrist'.¹⁹ On the few occasions on which 'Doctour' appears in the spoken text, it has the specific sense of MED 1(b). In Play 8, 'The Three Kings', where Herod asks his 'clarke' to expound the Jewish Messianic prophecies, he refers to him as 'Syr Doctor, that cheife art of clergie' (line 233), and Jesus confirms this specific usage in Play 11, 'The Purification; Christ and the Doctors', when he addresses

You that be maisters of Moyses lawe
and worthye doctours of great degree.²⁰ [rank]

Perhaps significantly, both words can also have a minority meaning of an authoritative written text.

There is some variation in usage in the speech-headings which may be significant both for the development of the cycle and for the developing role of this character.²¹ In Play 4, 'Abraham, Lot and Melchysedeck; Abraham and Isaac', MS Hm introduces the typological exposition at lines 460–75 with *Here the Docter saythe* but heads the following speech 'Expositor'; three other manuscripts (A, R, H) omit the stage direction, and the remaining manuscript (B) which retains it reads 'Expositor' for 'Docter'. A second stage direction, preceding the final prayer, *Here lett the Docter kneele downe and saye* (line 475sd), is found in the four earliest manuscripts (Hm, A, R, B), but the latest (H) omits it together with the rest of the play. These English stage directions were in the margins of the master-copy, presumably as production notes, and may for that reason have employed the more familiar term; but the change of usage and H's omission may also indicate that the final 'expository' speech in Play 4 was of a different date from the rest of the Play, which may explain some of the unusual features of that ending (see below).

¹⁹ *Chester Mystery Cycle*, ed. by Lumiansky and Mills, p. 405, line 260.

²⁰ *Chester Mystery Cycle*, ed. by Lumiansky and Mills, p. 214, lines 271–72.

²¹ The manuscripts are identified here by the letters assigned to them in the *Chester Mystery Cycle*, ed. by Lumiansky and Mills, p. ix; viz. Hm, San Marino, Henry E. Huntington Library, Huntington MS 2 (1591); A, London, British Library, Additional MS 10305 (1592); R, London, British Library, MS Harley 1033 (1600); B, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 175 (1604); H, London, British Library, MS Harley 2124 (1607).

Another terminological variation occurs in Play 5, 'Moses and the Law; Balaack and Balaam', which exists in two distinct versions. In that of the four earliest manuscripts (Hm, A, R, B), the two 'expositions' (lines 41–64, 388–455) are introduced respectively by 'Doctor' and *The Doctor speaketh*; in both cases the speaker serves an abridging function. In the different version in MS H, the heading is always 'Expositor' and his roles are both abridgement and interpretation. In Play 12, 'The Temptation; The Woman Taken in Adultery', MSS Hm, A, R, B read 'Docto(u)r' as the speech-headings after line 168 and line 280, while MS H, which tends to be conservative and seeks to 'restore' the 'original' wording throughout, reads 'Expositor'. This exceptional unanimity of usage, confirmed by four manuscripts, may suggest that the Expositor was an addition to this play. 'Expositor' is the sole term in Play 22, 'The Prophets of Antichrist', in all manuscripts.

The five plays in which the Expositor appears share the feature of discontinuous action. They present a sequence of events or characters separated in space and time and unconnected by any chain of cause and effect. In the case of four of the plays, these events include episodes unique to Chester's cycle. Play 4, 'Abraham, Lot and Melchysedeck; Abraham and Isaac', presents Abraham's rescue of Lot from the four kings and his exchange of gifts with Melchysedeck, as well as the common cycle-episode of the sacrifice of Isaac. Play 5, 'Moses and the Law; Balaack and Balaam', exists in two versions. Both have the giving of the Law to Moses, a common episode, but its central action is the unique English dramatization of Balaam and Balaack. In one version the play ends with a summary of the events leading to the death of Balaam, while in the other it ends with a sequence of Old Testament prophets. Play 6, 'The Annunciation and the Nativity', interweaves the traditional account of the journey to Bethlehem and the Nativity with the unique dramatization of the conversion of the Emperor Octavian. And Play 22, 'The Prophets of Antichrist', presents the unique sequence of the prophets of Antichrist, concluding with the fifteen signs before the Judgement Day. Only Play 12, 'The Temptation of Christ; The Woman Taken in Adultery', contains material common to the other cycles, though the conjunction of the two in a single play is unique. The Temptation usually follows a play of the baptism of Christ, God's acknowledgement of His Son being the cause of the Devil's suspicions and test, but Chester strangely lacks a baptism play, though the Baptist alludes to the event in Play 17, 'The Harrowing of Hell', at lines 57–72.

'Multi-episode' plays are a feature of Chester's cycle. Examples would include Plays 2, 'Adam and Eve; Cain and Abel'; 11, 'The Purification; Christ and the Doctors'; 13, 'The Blind Chelidonian; The Raising of Lazarus'; 14, 'Christ at the House of Simon the Leper; Christ and the Money-lenders; Judas' Plot'; 19,

'Christ on the Road to Emmaus; Doubting Thomas'. In these cases this technique appears to be driven by a practical need to compress the action, which is presented directly to the audience. The Expositor likewise enables compression by abridging or paraphrasing an action. But he is also the vehicle for presenting another level of meaning beyond the literal to the audience, usually to provide a link in the patterns of prophecy and foreshadowing.

The Expositor is, throughout, an authority figure, though how an audience assessed the relationship between a 'genuine' authority, such as a cleric, and an actor in an authority-role must be a matter for conjecture. It is questionable whether the person representing the Expositor-figure should be regarded even as 'acting' or even 'impersonating'. Unfortunately, we have no company accounts extant for the plays in which he appears, and have no evidence of payment or costume, though it is assumed that he wore some form of clerical dress. The first station for the plays was at the Abbey Gate before the clergy, which could provide circumstantial endorsement of him as their clerical interpreter. The Post-Reformation Banns stress the educational purpose of the alleged original author, Ranulf Higden, and the Expositor might also be seen as the author's voice presenting and explaining his text to the audience. Nugent Monk may have had this possibility in mind when, reviving some of the plays in Chester in 1907, he prefaced the performance with a reading of the Banns by an actor dressed as a Benedictine monk, supposedly representing Higden as the author of the Plays.²²

In theatrical terms, the Expositor's interventions punctuate the action, privileging the larger thematic function. He stands between the performers of the historical action and the audience, objectifying the action to them and creating a meditative distance between audience and players within the close and intimate space of the street-theatre. His disruptive function is emphasized by his first entry, in Play 4, 'Abraham, Lot, and Melchysedeck; Abraham and Isaac' (line 112), where he rides onto the scene as Abraham and Lot exchange gifts with Melchysedeck: *Expositor (equitando)*. We have no indication of his costume, but if it is accepted that he is dressed as a divine, in contemporary clerical dress, he becomes visually distinguished from the other characters. The fact that he is said to be riding indicates that he enters at ground-level and thus physically interposes himself between the characters and the audience. Mounted, he also sits above the crowd, to whom he talks down literally and metaphorically. He is not author but reader and interpreter, set apart from the audience by his superior knowledge:

²² See my *Recycling the Cycle: The City of Chester and its Whitsun Plays*, *Studies in Early English Drama*, 4 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), pp. 208–11.

Lordinges, what may this signifye	[MS H, this may]
I will expound yt appertly —	[clearly]
the unlearned standinge herebye	[MSS ARB, that the; MS H, that]
maye knowe what this may bee. ²³	

The first line seems to pose a question. There is, in the second line, a sense of ‘You won’t know, but don’t worry, I will tell you’. And there is a sort of self-satisfied pomposity about that allusion to ‘the unlearned’ which lurks within many of his speeches. The lines afford ample opportunity to inject ‘personality’ into this role.

The Expositor’s ‘expository’ role in the play is to point the relevance of the past to the present, to ‘read’ the play for the audience. Standing within the present, he can see not only the events of Abraham’s history but also the subsequent event of Christ’s Passion, part of Abraham’s future but our historical past, which has given added meaning to the original historical event. The Play’s main subject, the sacrifice of Isaac, is prefaced by two actions: the rescue of Lot and the exchange of gifts between Abraham, Lot, and Melchysedeck; and God’s covenant with Abraham, with the promise of his seed as the chosen race and the injunction to circumcision. The gifts of Melchysedeck are located ‘in the owld lawe’ (line 121), but signify ‘the newe testamente’ (line 118), the Eucharist which was Christ’s commandment, validated by His death ‘synce Christe dyed’ (line 125) and which ‘nowe done wee’ (line 130). The Expositor also becomes doctrinal guide here, stressing that as Melchysedeck’s offering was ‘in signification’ (line 131), so in our present (Post-Reformation) age we perform the act in signification, and implicitly not as the sacrificial act of the Mass. ‘Nowe done wee’ therefore also sets the immediate present against a proximate unreformed past. Circumcision is similarly located ‘in the ould lawe’ (line 196) and was replaced by baptism ‘when Christe dyed’ (line 199). The reference to baptism is interesting, given the absence of a play on the baptism of Christ. Both interpretations prepare us for the sacrifice, the prefiguration of Christ’s defining death, with which the Play ends.

In performance terms, the Expositor’s interventions seem to cover an ongoing silent action on stage. In this case, his speech follows a stage direction which refers to the exchange of gifts: *Here they doe goe together, and Abraham dothe take the bred and wyne, and Melc. the laden horse* (line 112sd) and by the end of the speech, Lot and Melchysedeck and the gifts have evidently gone and God confronts Abraham: *Here God appeareth to Abraham and saythe* (line 144sd). Does the Expositor then leave, or does he remain at the side watching, in preparation for his next speech at lines 193–208, by which time, according to a stage direction, Isaac seems

²³ *Chester Mystery Cycle*, ed. by Lumiansky and Mills, p. 62, lines 113–16.

to have appeared (cf. *Here Abraham, torninge him to his sonne Isaack, sayth*, line 228sd)? There seems good reason to believe, therefore, that when the Expositor speaks, he does so either in front of an ongoing but silent action or a tableau, in the manner of the patron or the donor of a religious painting or window who is depicted at the side worshipping.

This is surely the effect at the end of Play 4, where the Expositor becomes a vehicle for exploring the complex interplay of reality, mimesis, and transcendent truth. God blesses Abraham, the Expositor draws the 'significatyon' (line 460) from the episode for the audience (yee/you, lines 462, 463, 464), then finally kneels to pray to God, surely in the form of the actor-God still on stage, on behalf of the audience whom he now represents ('us' line 476, 'wee' lines 478, 480) and in imitation of 'this Abraham' (line 479), where the demonstrative strongly suggests a gesture towards the visible presence of the patriarch. The actors retreat into silence and are relegated to the background as their dramatic mode cedes place to the now foregrounded narrative or expository mode.

Finally, following the sacrifice of Isaac, the Expositor interprets the event as the prefiguration of the crucifixion and, having stressed the obedience of Isaac, kneels to ask God for the gift of comparable obedience 'ever to thy moste holye word' (line 477). While his interpretations are commonplace, they point to levels of meaning beyond the literal. They also point the relevance of the past to the fulfilment of God's will and to the sacraments and demands of the contemporary Church. Such connections accord with the patterns of cross-reference already noted as characteristic of the cycle, but also challenge the Anabaptist position, seen increasingly as a threat by both Anglican and Puritan Reformers in Elizabethan England, which denied that the Old Testament provided precedent or had relevance for the teachings and sacraments of the Church.

Simultaneously, the dramatic present becomes to the contemporary audience their historic past. As Francis Berry notes:

The dramatist shows the minute-by-minute unfolding present. The audience hears *and* sees it happening [...]. In the case of narrative we know what happened, we know at least that the action is ended before the narrator reports. [...] In drama it is still open for [the characters] to choose differently, and perhaps we hope that they will; in narrative they couldn't have.²⁴

²⁴ Francis Berry, 'Word and Picture in the Final Plays', in *Later Shakespeare*, ed. by John Russell Brown and Bernard Harris, Stratford-Upon-Avon Studies, 8 (London: Edward Arnold, 1966), pp. 81–102 (p. 83).

The Expositor here fuses the historical deed and its now past representation in a past tense: 'This deede yee seene done here in this place, | in example of Jesus done yt was' (lines 464–65). Is the 'deede' the sacrifice or the performance? Both are apposite, since the dramatic performance has transported the audience back to Abraham's present and the ongoing choices available to him. Now, the Expositor interposes himself to return the audience to their own present and force them to reflect on a deed in Abraham's future and their own past. In God's book of history and in their play-book the significance is the same. The past ('yt was', line 465; 'was sacrificyed', line 467; 'canne fonde', line 469; 'had brought', line 471; 'was obedyent', line 473; 'was beyne', line 479) has potential for us now ('may torne', line 463; 'may understand', line 468; 'grante', line 476; 'may accorde', line 478). We do not have the direct command from God as Abraham had, but we do now have before us the injunctions of 'thy moste holye word' (line 477), His Book. The Expositor then points to his and our own future in a significant shift of tense: 'And then altogether *shall* wee | that worthye kinge in heaven see' (lines 480–81, my italics) which locates God beyond the visible actor on stage, differentiating the mimetic from the truly transcendent.

Play 4 has additional interest because of the verbal affinities between its play of Isaac's sacrifice and the Brome play of 'Abraham and Issac'. The latter also has a Doctour, but he appears only at the end of the action to draw a moral from the play, warning mothers about undue grief at the death of their children. If, as is usually agreed, Brome represents an earlier version of the sacrifice from that in the cycle, this figure could have provided the basis for his appearance in the later version. But Brome provides no model for this sophisticated utilization of the Expositor's role to explore the interplay of theatre and scripture.

This ability to decode the literal text and to point its relevance to later events characterizes other interventions by the Expositor. He acts as glossator to the prophets in the version of Play 5, 'Moses and the Law; Balaack and Balaam', in MS H, pointing the relevance of their words to their New Testament fulfilment, and briefly alludes to the potential significance of Balaam's prophecy for Play 8, 'The Three Kings', towards the end of the Hm, A, R, and B versions of the same play. Similarly, in Play 22, 'The Prophets of Antichrist', he intervenes after each Apocalyptic prophecy to explain its eschatological significance. In such cases his role is identical to that of his embedded Jewish counterpart in Play 8, who is custodian, reader, and interpreter of the Book. Like the Expositor, he too points the future event signalled by the statement of the past, but does so from within rather than outside the action. Both Expositor and Doctor stand between the ongoing will of God and the Book which records it, offering assurance that history and Book are

recognized as remaining on programme. Again, in practical terms of performance, the Expositor's speeches also cover the successive entries of the prophets.

The Expositor also serves, more mundanely, as narrator and abridger. In Hm, A, R, and B's versions of Play 5, 'Moses and the Law; Balaack and Balaam', he expressly declares his function, skimming over the seemingly central Decalogue as he concludes the first giving of the Law to Moses:

Lordings, this commandement
 was the firste lawe that ever God sent;
 x poynctes there bine — takes intent — [heed]
 that moste effecte ys in.
 But all that storye for to fonge [adopt]
 to playe this moneth yt were to longe. [too long to play in a month]
 Therfore moste fruitfull ever amonge
 shortly wee shall myn.²⁵ [recall]

The Expositor speaks here for the playwright and performers ('wee shall myn'), stressing their selective principle ('moste fruitfull') and his role as abridger ('shortly'). He briefly describes the destruction of the first tables of law and the circumstances of their second giving, 'played as yee shall see' (line 57), which explains the brief episode in which God instructs Moses to carve the tables a second time, which Moses does in mime (line 80). Possibly, as he speaks, the audience see the player Moses break the tables on the stage and return to God. This narrative role is resumed at the end of the play when he describes the implementation of Balaam's plan to seduce the Israelites from obedience to God, the central role of Phineas, and the death of Balaam. Again, he steps outside the mimetic frame in a concluding speech to the audience on behalf of the performers which announces the next day's performance:

Now, worthy syrs both great and smale,
 here have wee shewed this storye before;
 and yf hit bee pleasinge to you all,
 tommorwe nexte yee shall have more.²⁶

He assumes a comparable role in the H version of the play, which concludes with a sequence of Old Testament prophets which he interprets:

Moe prophetes, lordinges, we might play, [more]
 but yt wold tary much the daye.

²⁵ *Chester Mystery Cycle*, ed. by Lumiansky and Mills, p. 81, lines 41–48.

²⁶ *Chester Mystery Cycle*, ed. by Lumiansky and Mills, p. 97, lines 448–51.

Therfore six, sothe to say,
are played in this place.²⁷ [truth to tell]

The same concern with the pressure of time is evident here. The explanation is not part of an abridging paraphrase in this case, but is followed by a brief summary of the meanings of the prophecies which he has just expounded. His conclusion similarly draws attention to the purpose of the play:

Lordinges, much more matter
is in this story then you see here.
But the substance, without were,
is played you before.²⁸ [assuredly]

In short, he claims that though the material is more extensive, the play has been designed to emphasize the pertinent points. In so doing he again implies his superior knowledge to the less well-informed audience. Since, unlike the Hm, A, R, and B versions, this version in MS H does not close a day's performance, the Expositor concludes by pointing not to the following Nativity but to the visit and gifts of the Magi which result from Balaam's prophecy of the star.²⁹

In Play 6, 'The Annunciation and the Nativity', the Expositor adds validation to his summarizing role. After the miraculous healing of the doubting midwife's hand, shrivelled when she tests Mary's virginity after the birth of Jesus, he enters to list the wonders that happened at the time of Christ's birth. But having no biblical authority for the miracle or wonders, he supplies a different authority:

Loe, lordinges all, of this miracle here
freere Bartholemewe in good mannere
beareth wytnes, withowten were,
as played is you before.³⁰ [rightly]
[truly]

The Expositor adds to his interpretative role his professed knowledge of authorities outside the Bible. Following Octavian's vision of a child in a star whom he elects to worship, the Expositor returns to conclude the play with a second validation, though of a different kind:

Lordinges, that this is verey
by verey sygne knowe yee maye.³¹ [true]

²⁷ *Chester Mystery Cycle*, ed. by Lumiansky and Mills, p. 480, lines 409–12.

²⁸ *Chester Mystery Cycle*, ed. by Lumiansky and Mills, p. 481, lines 441–44.

²⁹ *Chester Mystery Cycle*, ed. by Lumiansky and Mills, p. 481, lines 445–48.

³⁰ *Chester Mystery Cycle*, ed. by Lumiansky and Mills, p. 119, lines 564–67.

³¹ *Chester Mystery Cycle*, ed. by Lumiansky and Mills, p. 123, lines 699–700.

In this instance the sign is physical, not written. Octavian built the church of Sancta Maria Ara Caeli in Rome as a memorial to the vision, and the church can still be seen by travellers to Rome. His comment 'As men knowe that there have binne' (line 706) perhaps implies that he is among that number, literally as well as intellectually wide ranging. The Expositor here becomes a device to justify the legendary material in the play, which is consonant with the cycle's overall nervous concern to ensure that all its material can be justified.

Play 12, 'The Temptation of Christ; The Woman Taken in Adultery', presents a different problem. In linking the episodes of the Temptation of Christ and the Woman Taken in Adultery the play juxtaposes two events which are quite separate in the Bible. 'The Temptation' here follows the account in St Matthew's Gospel, chapter 4, verses 1–11, while 'The Woman Taken in Adultery' is related in St John's Gospel, chapter 8, verses 1–11, and belongs to a later stage in Christ's ministry. It is, however, possible to recognize a linking theme in the play. In both episodes Christ is tested — by the Devil and by the Pharisees — and triumphs, putting his testers to flight. In the second episode, where a third party is involved, the play also shows Christ's mercy and the woman's unbiblical profession of repentance, in contrast to His stern dismissal of the Devil. Such thematic interpretation would suffice. In the following play, 'The Blind Chelidonian; The Raising of Lazarus', two separated events in St John's Gospel, chapter 9, verses 1–38, and chapter 11, verses 1–46, are drawn together, and there is a similar thematic linkage: the believer's faith in each case is a necessary condition of divine healing. The Expositor appears only in Play 12, where he confirms his roles as authority and interpreter, pointing the wider function of the two parts in the willed plan of God and reinforcing the wider cross-links. He interprets Christ's successful resistance of the devil's three temptations as reversing Adam's failure to resist the equivalent temptations; and he explains the flight of the Pharisees from Christ to the writing of their sins in the dust by Christ as they speak. In both interpretations he cites authorities: 'as Gregorie makes mynd expresse' (line 170) and

as Augustine speaketh expressly
of hit in his homely
upon St. Johns Evangelye.³² [gospel]

In this he continues the roles of interpreter from Play 4 and informed reader from Play 6, again adding a dimension to the meaning of the action beyond the literal and visible. But unlike Play 4, where the significance of the events requires

³² *Chester Mystery Cycle*, ed. by Lumiansky and Mills, p. 229, lines 285–87.

interpretation, here a meaning is already available. The purpose is entirely to emphasize again the divine and purposive movement of history. He both adds a layer of meaning to the exemplary actions played and also takes the audience back from the play, speaking finally, perhaps across the tableau of the penitent woman kneeling before Christ.

Princeps Sinagogae as Historical and Fictive Reader

Two further figures stand outside the dramatized action in Plays 4, 'Abraham, Lot, and Melchisedeck; Abraham and Isaac', and the H version of Play 5, 'Moses and the Law; Balaack and Balaam', respectively. Play 5 in MS H opens with God addressing Moses 'and all the people that be here' (line 2), the contemporary audience constructed as the elect people of Israel. In the context of the sixteenth-century Reformation, His words gain added resonance:

you wott in Egipte when you were	[know]
out of thralldome I you broughte. ³³	[slavery]

The set is clearly a hill since repeated reference is made in stage directions and texts to 'montem' (mountain) and 'hill', which at the start represents Mount Sinai. God speaks presumably from the top. Moses evidently faces him, 'stans super montem' (standing on the mountain, MS H, line 32), since it is only when he addresses the people himself that the audience sees his transfigured appearance (lines 41–45).

Before that address, however,

*Tunc Princeps Sinagogae statuet eum in loco, et quasi pro populo loquatur ad dominum et Moysen.*³⁴

[Then let Princeps Sinagogae position himself in place and let him speak as if on behalf of the people to the Lord and Moses.]

This figure, whom one assumes is dressed in the manner of a doctor of the Old Law, interposes himself between the audience and the actors on the hill. He is not on the mountain but 'in loco' (in place), probably at audience level, and is there to speak for them, 'quasi pro populo' (as if on behalf of the people). His role is solely to point the historical response of the Israelites to God's words and

³³ *Chester Mystery Cycle*, ed. by Lumiansky and Mills, p. 466, lines 3–4.

³⁴ *Chester Mystery Cycle*, ed. by Lumiansky and Mills, p. 466, line 24sd.

presence. His first response is to voice the fear of the Israelites at the sight of God and His threatening tones (lines 25–32). Then, as Moses turns and reveals his radiant face and horned head, the response voiced is one of wonder combined with fear (lines 41–42, 46–48).

The positioning and the stage direction make it clear that the 'Princeps Sinagogae' stands between the audience and the scene rather as the Expositor does, but his role is different. The Expositor is always the possessor of a knowledge superior to that of the audience and, with the exception of the end of Play 4, speaks to, rather than for, them. He is a contemporary figure in contemporary dress, whereas the 'Princeps Sinagogae' is a historical figure within the frame of the action, voicing the responses of the historical Israelites. But the 'Princeps Sinagogae' also stands outside the action in pointing the required response of the contemporary audience in Chester. The scene is not allowed to speak for itself, which may suggest some unease at its possible reception and perhaps some puzzlement at the appearance of the actor-Moses ('horned he semes in our sighte', line 45) which might prompt an inappropriate response. It may be significant that Moses's transformation is not mentioned in the Hm, A, R, and B versions of the play and there is no corresponding intervening figure. Instead, as has been said, the Expositor acts in an abridging role. Moreover, it may also be significant that the Hm, A, R, and B versions style the Expositor as 'Doctor', whereas the H version uses the term 'Expositor', which may indicate that the Hm, A, R, and B versions revise the H version and exclude the transformation.

Preco as Controller of the Play

The speeches of two characters, styled respectively 'Preco' and 'the Messenger', frame Play 4, 'Abraham, Lot, and Melchysedeck; Abraham and Isaac'. The two may be the same character, though the functions are somewhat different. 'Preco' is derived from Latin 'precor', 'to ask, beg, pray, beseech', and his role is to request silence ('all peace', line 1) and room ('rowme and space', line 7) for the performance to begin. The Messenger, in contrast, is more peremptory, demanding that the action terminate at once: 'Make rowme, lordings, and give us waye' (line 484). In Play 4 Preco names himself as 'Goobett-on-the-Greene' (line 13), and it is interesting that in modern Festival productions, starting with those utilizing the acting-text of Edward Burns, this figure has been used throughout the whole performance to announce and link the plays, and has been presented as a kind of all-purpose popular entertainer.

As with other figures that have been considered who stand outside the action, Preco/Messenger has a counterpart within the action of a later play, but here the terms seem to reflect almost the reverse sense. In Play 6, 'The Annunciation and the Nativity', following the Annunciation and Joseph's doubt, there is a sudden break in continuity, marking a shift from Nazareth to Rome. Nuntius, termed 'Messinger' in MS R, echoes the closing lines of Play 4:

Make rowme, lordinges, and give us waye
and lett Octavian come and playe,
and Sybell the sage, that well fayre maye, [very beautiful maiden]
to tell you of prophecye.
That lord that dyed on Good Frydaye,
hee have you all both night and daye. [MSS AB, save]
Farewell, lordinges. I goe my waye,
I may noe lenger abyde.³⁵

This speech would appropriately introduce a separate play, but in context the Nuntius serves a dual function. He is both outside the historical action, introducing the next part of the play, and also within it, as Octavian's herald, clearing the way for a royal entry through the audience. He is distinguished by title and by function from Octavian's 'Preco', his impudent messenger, whom the Emperor addresses as 'boye' (lines 269, 273, 277, 293) and who delivers the proclamation of the taxing to the Jews.

The B version has the revealing side note to the opening speech of Play 4: 'Here beginneth the Preface'; MS H omits both the Expositor's concluding prayer and the closing lines of the Messenger which would balance this opening. The 'Preface' is multi-functional. It refers the audience to the previous play which has moved on: 'Noe awaye from us hee went | [Noah] and all his companye' (lines 3–4). It announces the arrival of the actor who, as Abraham, will begin the action (lines 5–6). It calls the audience to clear the acting area (lines 7–8). And finally, the speaker leaves quickly 'for lettyng of [your] playe' (line 16). The play evidently begins with some preparatory action; as the stage direction puts it:

*Abraham, having restored his brother Loth into his owne place, doth firste of all begine the play and sayth . . .*³⁶

It is not clear how Abraham 'restored his brother Loth into his owne place', but it suggests that Abraham has to conduct Lot to some point before speaking and

³⁵ *Chester Mystery Cycle*, ed. by Lumiansky and Mills, p. 104, lines 177–84.

³⁶ *Chester Mystery Cycle*, ed. by Lumiansky and Mills, p. 57, line 16sd.

the play is said to begin only when he speaks. Moreover, the action requires a laden horse, and the Expositor to enter on horseback, so the demand for 'room and space' may have more point than the usual demand for silence. The reference to 'beginne the play' suggests that both the opening speech and the restoration of Lot are seen as outside the action itself, which indicates a further awareness of a distinction between the outer and inner frames of illusion.

The conclusion has a similar effect. In removing the Expositor's prayer, H may have found evidence in the common original that this was an addition. But the Expositor's petitionary role here is unusual. Throughout the play he has been pointing the precedents and prefigurations of the action. Here exceptionally, as we have seen, he stops speaking to the audience and speaks instead with and for them, attaching an exemplary meaning to the play. Instead of standing in front of the audience addressing them, he kneels (line 475), apparently like them facing the stage. This leaves the awkward practical problem of exit, which is solved by the Messenger's rude entrance, again evidently through the audience.

As at the start, space is demanded ('Make rowme, lordings, and give us waye', line 484), and the next play announced (lines 485–87), and the Messenger whirls out again with the same unexplained expedition as Preco ('I may noe lenger abyde', line 491). Like Goobett's Preface, his speech alerts the audience to the practical nature of play performance, the need to maintain a schedule, to keep to the allotted time. It transfers the 'obedience' which is the Expositor's prayer from 'obedience to the word of God' to 'obedience to the dictates of play-production', the authority of the town and its community. And it abruptly breaks the illusion, introducing a further 'outer' frame that reduces the Expositor from authoritative contemporary spokesperson for the Book of God to an actor within a performance governed by the play-book and subject to rigid control.

Moreover, it builds into the performance what was apparently an evident fact of the actual production of the cycle throughout. David Rogers's 1609 description of the Chester productions describes how

before thei firste Carige was gone from one place the seconde came. and so before the seconde was gone the thirde came. and so tell the laste was donne all in order withoute anye stayeing in anye place. for worde beinge broughte howe euerye place was neere doone the came and made noe place to tarye tell the laste was played.³⁷

This chain of messengers carrying word of progress from station to station receives mimetic replication in the opening and closing speeches of Play 4, producing the

³⁷ REED: *Chester*, p. 239.

complex framing sequence of the historical messenger transformed into the mimetic messenger interrupting the authoritative Expositor in his attitude of devotion before the final tableau of the play's inner action and exposing the actor within the role. A clear line is drawn between the theatre of biblical history, authored ultimately by God, and the practical realities of play production in sixteenth-century Chester.

RICHARD CAREW'S 'ORDINARY': THE FIRST ENGLISH DIRECTOR

Philip Butterworth

The description provided by Sir Richard Carew in his *Survey of Cornwall* of the 'Ordinary' who prompted players in full view of the audience is well known.¹ What is less well known concerns the purpose and impact of this convention on the theatrical dynamic of this process in performance and reception.²

¹ 'The Guary miracle, in English, a miracle-play, is a kinde of Enterlude, compiled in *Cornish* out of some scripture history, with that grossenes, which accompanied the Romanes *vetus Comedia*. For representing it, they raise an earthen Amphitheatre, in some open field, hauing the Diameter of his enclosed playne some 40. or 50. foot. The Country people flock from all sides, many miles off, to heare & see it: for they haue therein, deuils and deuices, to delight as well the eye as the eare: the players conne not their parts without booke, but are prompted by one called the Ordinary, who follow-eth at their back with the booke in his hand, and telleth them softly what they must pronounce aloud. Which maner once gaue occasion to a pleasant conceyted gentleman, of practising a mery pranke: for he vndertaking (perhaps of set purpose) an Actors roome, was accordingly lessoned (before-hand) by the Ordinary, that he must say after him. His turne came: quoth the Ordinarie, Goe forth man and shew thy selfe. The gentleman steps out vpon the stage, and like a bad Clarke in scripture matters, cleauing more to the letter then the sense, pronounced those words aloud. Oh (sayes the fellowe softly in his eare) you marre all the play. And with this his passion, the Actor makes the audience in like sort acquainted. Hereon the promptor falles to flat rayling & cursing in the bitterest termes he could deuise: which the Gentleman with a set gesture and countenance still soberly related, vntill the Ordinary driuen at last into a madde rage, was faine to giue ouer all. Which trousse though it brake off the Enterlude, yet defrauded not the beholders, but dismissed them with a great deale more sport and laughter, then 20. such Guaries could haue afforded.' Richard Carew, *The Survey of Cornwall* (London: S. S[tafford] for Iohn Iaggard, 1602), pp. 71–72.

² For additional examination of Carew's description and related matters see my 'Book-Carriers: Medieval and Tudor Staging Conventions', *Theatre Notebook*, 46 (1992), 15–30; Jean

How did the convention work and how did it affect its communicated purpose? To what extent were the functions of the Ordinary precursors to those of the later termed 'director'? These questions provide the opportunity to re-examine Carew's description in some detail and provide focus for its analysis.

Carew's account may be seen to divide into two sections: one delivers factual information concerning the activity of the Ordinary and his relationship with the player, and the other elaborates upon this process in the form of an anecdote that reinforces the convention. So, what did the Ordinary do? Clearly, he prompted in full view of the audience. In doing this he followed the player around the performance space which is designated by Carew as 'an earthen Amphitheatre, in some open field, hauing the Diameter of his enclosed playne some 40. or 50. foot'. When he spoke to the player, he did so 'softly'. He also prepared the player in the task of responding to this particular convention of prompting. In the anecdote concerning the player who played a prank upon the Ordinary, Carew says that the player 'was accordingly lessoned (before-hand) by the Ordinary, that he must say after him'. This much is stated in Carew's description. Thus, apart from the act of speaking 'softly', the Ordinary can be seen to have performed functions not carried out by more recent prompters.

So, what are the implications of what the Ordinary did? What did the audience make of seeing both the Ordinary and the player in action at more or less the same time? What happened when the Ordinary had finished prompting one player and needed to prompt another? What resulted if simultaneous action needed to take place in another part of the playing space away from the player being prompted? Could such a convention have permitted simultaneous action in another part of the 'enclosed playne'?

The principal and obvious point to make, as indicated earlier, is that the kind of prompting delivered by the Ordinary is different from more recent and current forms. Under later and modern conventions the prompter is required to remain out of sight and audible range of the audience. The theatrical intention is such that the prompter is meant not to be seen or heard by the audience. This

Fouquet's "The Martyrdom of St Apollonia" and "The Rape of the Sabine Women" as Iconographical Evidence of Medieval Theatre Practice', *Leeds Studies in English*, 29, Essays in Honour of Peter Meredith (1998), 55–67; 'Prompting in Full View of the Audience: A Medieval Staging Convention', in *Drama and Community: People and Plays in Medieval Europe*, ed. by Alan Hindley, Medieval Texts and Cultures of Northern Europe, 1 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1999), pp. 231–47; 'Prompting in Full View of the Audience: The Groningen Experiment', *Medieval English Theatre*, 23 (2002 [for 2001]), 122–71.

difference begs some further questions. Why did this changed function or mode exist? What was the 'Ordinary-player' relationship required to do that was different from more recent practice?

The principal reason for the existence of the convention described by Carew is because 'the players conne not their parts without booke, but are prompted by one called the Ordinary'. The first part of this sentence means that the players did not know their parts by heart. The players did not memorize their lines and it need not be assumed that this was necessarily through negligence or lack of skill. Here, the important consideration is that the convention did not require the players to know their lines in the first place. Instead of what might be considered a more conventional process, the second part of the sentence determines that the mechanism of delivering lines was through intervention by the Ordinary. Here, the Ordinary did not operate like more recent prompters by responding to the default of the player. Since the player had not attempted to learn his lines at all he could not be in default for having forgotten them. Thus, the Ordinary's function in prompting was to 'instigate' lines and action rather than to 'respond' to the loss of memory of the player. This difference in responsibility for 'instigation' and 'responsiveness' is fundamental to the distinction between these conventions and created different terms of reference by which communication of the event took place. The initiative for action, be it vocal or physical, operated under a changed onus.

Given that the player did not know any of his lines it may be presumed, in turn, that the Ordinary prompted all the lines. This too, indicates a fundamentally different process to one where the prompter operates in relation to the sporadic default of the player. In this convention the player was totally dependent upon the Ordinary for the continuous provision of his lines. Stephen Gosson alludes to this condition in his *An Apologie of the School of Abuse* in 1579 when he says: 'If it bee my fortune too meete with the learned woorkes of this London *Sabinus*, that can not play the Poet without a Prompter; nor vtter a wise worde, without a Piper: you shall see we will make him to blush like a blacke Dogge when he is graueled; or to dance you a Galiarde when he takes his keye.'³ In the same work, Gosson also refers to the condition of committing lines to memory when

³ Stephen Gosson, *The Ephemerides of Phialo, deuided into three Bookes, The first, A method which he ought to follow that desireth to rebuke his freend, when he seeth him swarue: without kindling his choler, or hurting himselfe. The second, A Canuazado to Courtiers in foure pointes. The third, The defence of a Curtezan ouerthrowen. And a short Apologie of the Schoole of Abuse, against Poets, Pipers, Players, & their Excusers* (London: Thomas Dawson, 1579), sig. 92^v.

he says: 'And because his mashippe would seeme learned, he heyred him seruantes with great stipendes, of which, one had *Homer* without Booke, another *Hesiod*, and nine Fidlers heads to make him an *Index*, of euery one of them taking some seuerall names of his acquaintance, too bee remembered.'⁴ The same kind of phrase in respect of learning and remembering lines is referred to in Plutarch's *Lives*, where it is stated that there should be 'an Oration which [. . .] *Lysander* should have conned without book, to have spoken in open Assembly'.⁵ Similarly, in *A manifest detection of the moste vyle and detestable vse of Diceplay* (c. 1555) the ability to remember significant information for nefarious purposes is afforded to 'y^e taker vp, of a skilful man in all things, who hath by long trauill cunnid w'oute y^e boke a C. [hundred] resons to insimate [insinuate] himselfe into a mans acquayntaunce'.⁶ The same sentence, in revised form, may be seen in *Mihil Mumchance, his Discouerie of the Art of Cheating in false Dyce play* (1597) where the sense is made clearer: 'The first is the taker vp, a skilfull man in all thinges, who hath by long labour learned without booke a hundred reasons to insinuate himselfe into a mans acquaintance'.⁷ The above examples serve to support the notion that learning lines 'without booke' means learning lines by heart and, by inference, 'not' learning 'without booke' refers to 'not knowing' lines by heart.

Since the Ordinary may be seen to have prompted all the lines and was required to speak 'softly' to the player it appears that the Ordinary must have followed the player at a close distance throughout the playing space. The Ordinary 'shadowed' the player as he moved around the space. This seems to have been a straightforward process providing that the player delivered relatively long speeches that were not broken up into dialogue exchange across the space. If dialogue between players became the dominant mode and the Ordinary was required

⁴ Gosson, *Schoole of Abuse*, sig. 91^r.

⁵ Plutarch, *The Lives of the Noble Grecians & Romans, compared together, by that Grave Learned Philosopher & Historiographer Plutarch of Chaeronea. Translated out of Greek into French, by James Amiot [. . .] and out of French into English, by Sir Thomas North* (Cambridge: John Haynes for George Sawbridge, 1676), p. 517.

⁶ Gilbert Walker [attrib.], *A manifest detection of the moste vyle and detestable vse of Diceplay, and other practises lyke the same, a Myrrour very necessary for all yonge Gentilmen & others sodenly enabled by worldly abūdace, to loke in* (London: Abraham Vele, c. 1555), sig. Diii^v.

⁷ Gilbert Walker [attrib.], *Mihil Mumchance, his Discouerie of the Art of Cheating in false Dyce play, and other vnlawfull games: With a Discourse of the Figging Craft: And also of diuers new deuises of Cosenages practised commonly at Fayers and Markets: With many deceitfull practises used by bad and lewd Women*. (London: Iohn Danter for William Iones, 1579), sig. D2^v.

to divide his attention between players where did the Ordinary go or stand in order to continue his function? What did he do? Did he position himself equidistantly from two or more players?⁸

All the above questions focus on the implications of what the Ordinary did. Perhaps the most important of these considerations exists with the constant visual statement and reminder to the audience that the Ordinary and player operated interdependently. The two figures combined in creating the visual theatrical statement. In similar terms, could it be that the Ordinary and the player created a joint vocal statement? Because Carew says that the Ordinary spoke 'softly' to the player it may be seen to follow that the Ordinary was not intended to be heard by the audience and that a contrast in volume of their respective voices was witnessed by the audience when Carew records that the player 'must pronounce aloud'. Given the size of the playing space the difference in volume of their respective voices is likely to have been considerable. Does such a potential difference in vocal level point to the relative prominence of the player in this dual presentational relationship? This seems likely, at least in vocal terms, and placed the Ordinary in a subliminal or seemingly subordinate position to the theatrical statement provided by the player. However, the audience was presumably aware of the Ordinary's role. This was surely the case otherwise the implication of the practical joke in Carew's anecdote could not have had any meaning. Although the audience was effectively encouraged to respond to the conspicuousness of the player, the potential relegation of the role of the Ordinary in the audience's consciousness was a choice made by its members. The ability of an audience to decide whether it focussed its attention upon the Ordinary, the player, or both at the same time no doubt constantly changed according to the nature of the action and its use of space.

The capacity of an audience to 'see' and 'not see' the prompter is a telling indictment of the flexibility conditioned by the human imagination. An audience can accept the visual presence of a prompter and at the same time dismiss him from its concentration. The audience is capable of holding both realities in its vision at one and the same time. This capacity does not need to be trained. The terms of reference established by a production, whether consciously or unconsciously determined, guide the audience in its natural ability to hold more than one reality in its collective imagination at the same time. Although such ability does not need training there does need to be consistency to the performed convention(s) that establish the tacit or overt rules of engagement. Perhaps the

⁸ This question was tackled in Butterworth, 'Prompting: Groningen Experiment', pp. 129–37.

nearest modern equivalent figure who demonstrates this capacity to be 'seen' and 'not seen' is the onstage signer who signs action and dialogue of a play for those in the audience who are deaf. Under this sort of condition both deaf and hearing audiences are able to maintain fluid responses to switches in concentration between the signer and the action or the signer or the action alone. A similar dynamic may be seen between a football (soccer) referee and the players.

Knowledge that the player could not perform his role without instigation from the Ordinary no doubt acted as a powerful influence upon the audience in terms of what it chose to see or watch. The audience knew of the relevance of the Ordinary in determining what happened in performance. The dual and simultaneous roles of the Ordinary and player made for a conventionally different type of communicative axis through which communication took place. Not only could the relative prominence of each role be modified but the player effectively became the acknowledged and understood mouthpiece of the Ordinary. The player could only repeat lines fed to him by the Ordinary. At one level, the audience was presumably aware that the player spoke the Ordinary's words. These were not simply the player's own words. At another level, the player became a puppet-like surrogate whose actions were promoted, licensed, and regulated by the Ordinary in his complementary role as a puppeteer-like controller. It is the breakdown of this control upon which the anecdote derives its significance.

In a conventional twenty-first century naturalistic work of theatre, the principal communication of theatrical statement works through the actor-actor relationship. In the case of the 'Guary miracle' the major line of communication appears to have been through the prompter-player association. This, no doubt, affected what the audience saw and what it made of what it saw. If the principal mechanism for communicating theatrical statement to the audience was through the prompter-player arrangement, what happened to those players who were not immediately engaged by the prompter? What did they do whilst waiting for their next lines? Did they stand awkwardly in the manner referred to by Robert Greene (1592) in his description of the love-struck Luciano: 'he stood like a trewant that lackt a prompter, or a plaier that being out of his part at his first entrance, is faine to haue the boke to speak what he should performe'?⁹ If the convention was a naturalistic one or one that moved towards naturalism then the player was likely

⁹ Robert Greene, *Greenes, Groats-Worth of witte, bought with a million of Repentance. Describing the follie of youth, the falsehood of makeshifte flatterers, the miserie of the negligent, and mischiefes of deceiuing Courtezans. Written before his death and published at his dyeing request* (London: William Wright, 1592), sig. C3^r.

to have been required to maintain the believable life of the scene. If, as seems likely in the case of the 'Guary miracle', the presentation was a didactic, representational scene there is unlikely to have been a requirement to present this kind of pretence. The emphasis is on the speaker and the other inactive players simply wait in a neutral position, that is, remaining still and deliberately not contributing to or detracting from the action, until it is their 'turn' to speak. This notion of it being the players' 'turn' to speak seems to be central to this kind of didactic performance. It need not be anything else. The players do not need to keep a naturalistic life going throughout periods of inactivity. The words of the 'Guary miracle' convey the meaning and the imaginative relationships. Under these circumstances, involved and interactive communication between players was secondary, or even non-existent, to the 'Ordinary'—player development. Communication through the player—player relationship was less likely because of the dependency on the 'Ordinary' who worked as a pivot between players and audience.

Although the player repeated words spoken by the Ordinary, it is important to consider the nature of such repetition. Since the player did not commit his lines to memory can it be assumed that he knew or understood what he said? If it was required that he should understand his prompted lines where did this understanding come from? Did it occur during the period before the performance when the player 'was accordingly lessoned (before-hand) by the Ordinary, that he must say after him'? Was it provided by the Ordinary in performance through his own understanding, manner, tone, inflection, rhythm, or communicated sense? Did the Ordinary present lines to the player in such a way as to convey inbuilt understanding? If so, was it the accuracy of these features that was repeated and to which the audience listened? In other words, was the player required to repeat and present that understanding provided by the Ordinary? Understanding lies at the root of later English theatre and its successful communication to the audience, but it is not clear whether the convention that operated in this context placed such a premium on the player's need to understand. It seems likely that repeated understanding by the player might have varied in consistency. Sometimes the sense is likely to have been understood and communicated. At other times the lines are likely to have been repeated in a parrot-like fashion without actual or communicated understanding. If this was the case, would it have mattered? Even when attempts are made by players to learn lines in other contexts, depending on the way in which the lines are learned, there may still be repetition of a kind which betrays a lack of understanding. Roger Ascham in his *The Scholemaster* (1570) focuses on this condition when referring to the way in which some children learn by rote: 'Their whole knowledge, by learning without the booke, was tied onely to

their tong & lips, and neuer ascēded vp to the braine & head, and therefore was sone spitte out of the mouth againe.’¹⁰ If understanding was not present, repetition of lines by the player may have produced similar effects to those learned by rote.

The possibility of such unevenness of understanding may have weakened the whole performance if it was considered an important criterion to the successful development of the work. Since understanding is necessary to the presentation of realism, does potential lack of understanding point to a presentational mode that is different from realism? This seems possible and likely. Lines repeated without understanding, as if by rote, are likely to have emerged as statements. Here, belief in the realism of such statements is not likely to have been the guiding condition to which an audience responded. In terms of realism, or naturalism, that might be expected today, lines delivered by Carew’s player may well have seemed particularly self-conscious in their delivery. Under modern conditions this state of affairs might seem to be inadequate and inferior to its purpose; in effect, an apology or second-best practice. But why should performance of the ‘Guary miracle’ seem second-best if the ‘Country people flock from all sides, many miles off, to heare & see it’?

If the Ordinary’s role had been one of responding to the default of the player then the convention might have seemed to be one dealing with second-best practice. But adoption of the convention as described by Carew appears to have been deliberate and not promoted for reasons of default, emergency, or ineptitude. Because of this condition it is not appropriate to ask such questions as the following: Was the process developed because the players could not be relied upon to know their lines? Why did the players not attempt to learn their lines? Although it might be interesting and useful to know the answers to these questions, each of them is based upon the premise that there was something wrong or inferior with this particular theatrical process and that the convention described by Carew provided the remedial answer.

Another condition that seemingly points to a weakened presentational convention concerns the additional time taken for the Ordinary to deliver his softly spoken words to the player in order to have them picked up and repeated. This is a key dynamic feature of the performance. Effectively, the audience witnessed a break in the delivery of lines. A silence, and possibly a stillness, ensued while the

¹⁰ Roger Ascham, *The Scholemaster: Or plaine and perfite way of teaching children, to vnderstand, write, and speake, the Latin tong, but specially purposed for the priuate bringing vp of youth in Ientlemen and Noble mens houses, and commodious also for all such, as haue forgot the Latin tonge, and would, by themselues, without à Scholemaster, in short tyme, and with small paines, recouer à sufficient habilitie, to vnderstand, write, and speake Latin* (London: Iohn Daye, 1570), sig. K iii^v.

player listened out for his next line(s). To modern sensibilities and cultural codes such a silence and stillness might result in audience embarrassment, confusion, and disengagement from the action. However, in practice, this presumed hiatus is not likely to have been as problematic as it might appear.¹¹ The spatial and temporal dimensions conditioned by playing outdoors in 'an earthen Amphitheatre, in some open field' are likely to have created conditions whereby an audience could respond to an acceptable rhythm of line delivery that included the pause. Because playing outdoors occurred in a space without confined sound-reflecting surfaces, as is the case when playing indoors, the time taken for the spoken word to reach its intended audience is likely to have been of a longer duration than an equivalent indoor presentation. This extended outdoor time bears upon the rate of delivery of lines and creates a different rhythm to that used when playing indoors. This is not simply a matter of the delivery being slowed down but it is concerned with an understanding and recognition of the production of a different overall rhythm that is conditioned by the dimension of outdoor space. The witnessed pause is part of the conditioning structure of the delivery. This relationship and resultant rhythm presumably put stress on the delivered lines as staccato statements by virtue of the length of line that a player was capable of holding in his head between prompts. The same relationship may be seen in a Christian marriage service where the priest's or vicar's prompted 'line' is repeated by the prospective husband and wife. The lines are given to the couple in short phrases or sections that can be held satisfactorily in the mind and repeated. The possibility that the responses may seem stilted to the congregation does not detract from the seriousness of the content of the repeated phrases. It is the very repetition of such lines that carries the significance.

The rate at which action occurs in modern theatre is a key concern for its audience although it does not appear to have been a preoccupation for a medieval equivalent. It seems to have been more important for a medieval audience that all the speeches, dialogue, images, and other presentational features were in the correct order or sequence and timed so as not to interfere with conventional, traditional, or planned action.¹² This sort of concern for the player's delivery may be seen in the translated rubrics of the thirteenth-century *Cyprus Passion Cycle*:

¹¹ Butterworth, 'Prompting: Groningen Experiment', p. 155.

¹² This concern is reflected in explicit stage directions that require action to happen 'Now', 'Then', 'Here', and 'afterwards'. See my 'Timing Theatrical Action in the English Medieval Theatre', *Early Theatre: A Journal Associated with the Records of Early English Drama*, 4 (2001), 87–100 (pp. 88–89).

Furthermore, they shall take good care that the one not hasten the other's speech nor interrupt his words so as to create confusion; but everyone, in his appointed place, whenever thou desire it, shall speak, ask, or answer with attention and in no other wise¹³

Modern emphasis on timing in relation to speed, pace (rate), or rhythm as conditioned by instant picking up of cues does not appear to be one with which a medieval audience was preoccupied. Cues were simply the mechanism by which 'turns' were determined. Any requirements for verisimilitude from a medieval audience appear to have been satisfied within a sort of elastic time frame, at least by modern expectations, where timing was less important than correctness of order and sequence. Concern for what might be regarded as poor timing was only as important as any resultant confusion or disengagement that might occur as a consequence of it.

Given that the Ordinary was required to instigate words and action rather than respond to the default of the player, the capacity of the Ordinary was such that it was possible for him to tell, instruct, cajole, guide, show, encourage, or demonstrate what it was that the player needed to say and do. Effectively, the 'Ordinary' may be seen to have directed the play in performance. His role was that important. In speaking 'softly' to the players he was presumably not intended to be heard by the audience. Was he therefore in a position to instruct players in a similar manner concerning 'where' and 'when' to move? Carew's description does not specifically inform of this, but because the 'Ordinary' carried the book he may well have been in possession of additional production or directorial information that may have been communicated 'softly'.

These functions today fall within the scope of the director. Modern directors may draw upon this range of functions although not all at the same time. Some of these functions are also currently more or less fashionable than others. For instance, not many modern directors tell or instruct players what to do. Under influential principles of Stanislavskian process they rather guide or encourage players in 'finding' or 'discovering' the 'truth' of the character. If the player can do this then he is often seen to fulfil the requirements and vision of the director. It is clear from Carew's account that the Ordinary told and instructed the player in what he should do. It is unclear whether this sort of directorial mode took the form of demonstrating to the player what must be done, but it may be inferred that the Ordinary was implicitly suggesting to the player 'do what I do' or 'copy me'.

¹³ *The Cyprus Passion Cycle*, ed. by August C. Mahr, Publications in Mediaeval Studies (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1947), p. 125.

There is a temptation to assume that the 'Guary miracle' as described by Carew refers to one of the extant forms of Cornish drama when considering functions of the Ordinary. Certainly, some correspondence may be seen in the nature of the playing space as described by Carew and the circular staging plans contained in the texts of *The Cornish Ordinalia* and *The Life of Saint Meriasek*.¹⁴ These plans contain the names of the principal figures portrayed in the plays which are positioned around the periphery of the circular plans and indicate the positions from which the named figures apparently operated. So, it seems from these plans that the full size of the circular playing place was intended to be used in the delivery of the plays. If these plays, or their like, are those to which Carew refers as the 'Guary miracle' then the Ordinary needed to travel and cover the entire space and prompt accordingly. Similarly, the player needed to be heard from one of these locations on the rim of the 'enclosed playne' over a distance of '40. or 50. foot'. The Ordinary's need to move across the space was no doubt governed by the length of the player's spoken lines. Exchanges of short, two- or three-line sequences, as occasionally contained in the above Cornish plays, may well have made more demands on the Ordinary in respect of the need to cover the ground of the 'playne' than would have longer speeches where the Ordinary was able to stay close to the player for longer. The inference to be drawn is that the 'Guary miracle' consisted of longer speeches that permitted the Ordinary to perform his duties. The convention, as represented by the functions of the Ordinary, may be seen to draw less attention to itself if longer speeches were involved. Shorter lines in exchange between characters are likely to have made for more frenetic activity from the Ordinary.¹⁵

The case for use of longer speeches in the 'Guary miracle' is supported by the account written by William Scawen (1600 or 1601–85) who was 'Vice-Warden of the Stanneries', and according to a hand-written note on the title page of the British Library copy of his *Observations on an Ancient Manuscript* he was 'a prisoner during the Protectorate'. He stresses the devotional function of these performances when he describes the

Guirimears*, [* Signification of which word in Cornish is Speeches great.] which were used at the great conventions of the people, at which they had famous interludes celebrated with great preparations, and not without shewes of devotion [...] in them, solemnized in open and spacious downs of great capacity, encompassed about with earthen

¹⁴ *The Ancient Cornish Drama*, ed. by Edwin Norris, 2 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1859), II, 201; *Beunans Meriasek. The Life of Saint Meriasek, Bishop and Confessor: A Cornish Drama*, ed. and trans. by Whitley Stokes (London: Trübner, 1872), pp. 144, 145.

¹⁵ Butterworth, 'Prompting: Groningen Experiment', pp. 160–61.

banks, and some in part stone work, of largeness to contain thousands, the shapes of which remain in many places at this day, though the use of them long since gone. These were frequently used in most parts of the county at the conveniency of the people for their meeting together, in which they represented, by grave actings, scriptural histories, personating patriarchs, princes, and other persons, and with great oratory pronounced their harangue, framed by art and composed with heroick stile, such as have been known to be of old in other nations.¹⁶

According to Scawen, these presentations were ‘not without shewes of devotion in them’ and were ‘solemnized’ and represented by ‘grave actings’ with ‘great oratory’ that ‘pronounced their harangue’. All of this was ‘composed with heroick stile’. The ‘harangue’ is a hectoring form of presentation and is unequivocal in its theatrical force and is well suited to being prompted in the manner conditioned by the Ordinary for it is delivered by the player with a kind of self containment as a prompted statement. The qualities ascribed to the performance of these ‘Guirrimears’ by Scawen are ones that are essentially positive and refer to presentational style. They do not belittle the nature of performances like those accounts that have occurred through interpretation of Carew’s comment, when describing the ‘Guary miracle’ with that ‘grossenes which accompanied the *Romanes vetus Comedia*’. Carew’s comment has led to some erroneous interpretation that suggests presentations were crude, naive, and untrustworthy.¹⁷ However, Carew’s comment refers to the style of presentation and not to presentational quality or lack of it. The ‘*Romanes vetus Comedia*’, by its nature, was relatively simple in its narrative structure but bold and skilful in its execution. This is the comparison to which Carew alludes. The prompting function of Carew’s ‘Ordinary’ fits appropriately into a context of this kind and seemingly helps to define both identity and purpose of the ‘Guary miracle’.

¹⁶ William Scawen, *Observations on an Ancient Manuscript, entitled Passio Christi, Written in the Cornish Language, and now preserved in the Bodleian Library. With an Account of the Language, Manners, and Customs of the People of Cornwall*. By [William] Scawen, Esq. Vice-Warden of the Stanneries. From a Manuscript in the Library of Thomas Astle, Esq. 1777 (London, 1777), p. 14.

¹⁷ Such responses may be found in Brian Murdoch, *Cornish Literature* (Cambridge: Brewer, 1993), p. 43; Brian Murdoch, ‘The Cornish Medieval Drama’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Theatre*, ed. by Richard Beadle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 216; William L. Tribby, ‘The Medieval Prompter: A Reinterpretation’, *Theatre Survey*, 5 (1964), 71–72; Jane A Bakere, *The Cornish Ordinalia: A Critical Study* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1980), p. 13. See also my ‘Prompting: A Medieval Staging Convention’, pp. 238–40.

Scawen's description of the 'Guirrimears' is of a bold performance consisting of 'great oratory [. . .] composed with heroick stile'. This is not an account of presentational weakness of a kind that constitutes an apology for second-best practice. Although Scawen does not refer to such a role as that of Carew's Ordinary he is quite clear about the dynamics of performance. If Carew's Ordinary was such a figure involved in the events described by Scawen then the contribution of the Ordinary must have been sufficiently integrated into the delivery of the presentation as to affect the powerful impact of the 'Guirrimears' and permit the description by Scawen. The translation by Scawen of 'Guirrimears' is of 'Speeches great'. No doubt this magnitude refers to both the words and their delivery.

Although Carew's *Survey of Cornwall* was published in 1602 the work appears to have had an interrupted gestation. It seems that Carew worked upon the book as early as 1584 and then put it aside before reworking the material for publication.¹⁸ During this period Carew recognized that a number of his early-recorded observations were inaccurate or out of date and thus he revised his earlier work. It mattered to him that his readers should be able to rely on his observations. It is difficult to know whether the specific account of the Ordinary underwent revision during the period leading up to publication but it may be possible and likely that reference to the Ordinary refers to a date prior to 1584. Given this tentative dating who else might be considered as the first English director?

There are a number of candidates to be considered as the ostensible first English director. Here, a distinction is made between what might be called today a 'director' or an 'artistic director' and that kind of figure who organizes, manages, provides funds, and is responsible for the delivery of supplies or facilities to the production. Sometimes such a figure is called a 'producer'. This term is borrowed from the film industry. So, claims to be considered, as a director, need to be supported by evidence of directorial functions and tasks. The functions carried out by Carew's Ordinary in their context are directorial ones.

Perhaps the initial contenders to be considered as would-be directors are the pageant masters at York and Coventry. At York, records of the installment, duties, and activity of pageant masters start as early as 1410 in the records of the Marshals¹⁹

¹⁸ Carew, *Survey of Cornwall*, Epistle to the Reader; F. E. Halliday, *Richard Carew of Antony: The Survey of Cornwall* (London: Andrew Melrose, 1953), pp. 47–48; Butterworth, 'Book-Carriers', p. 16.

¹⁹ *Records of Early English Drama: York*, ed. by Alexandra F. Johnston and Margaret Rogerson, 2 vols (Toronto: University of Toronto Press; Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1979) [hereafter *REED: York*], I, 16.

and continue in relation to most of the guilds up to the Bakers' records of 1574.²⁰ Although the York pageant masters were responsible to their respective guilds for organizing the 'putting forth' or 'bringing forth' of the guilds' pageants and collecting the 'pageant silver' to fund presentation of the pageants, there is no evidence of them fulfilling directorial functions or tasks. Their roles were those of the currently termed 'producer'.

A pageant master at Coventry possesses a slightly stronger case to be considered as the first director; his name was Thomas Colclow and the bulk of his duties as a pageant master occurred between 1450 and 1464.²¹ A number of accounts refer to Colclow's activities but the following item from the Smiths' Accounts at Coventry for 1453 indicates the scope of his responsibilities:

That Thomas Colclow skynner ffrom this day forth shull have þe Rewle of þe pajaunt unto þe end of xij yers next folowing he for to find þe pleyers and all þat longeth þerto all þe seide terme save þe keeper of the craft shall let bring forth þe pajant & find Cloyes þat gon abowte þe pajant and find Russhes þerto and every wytson-weke who þat be keepers of þe crafte shall dyne with Colclow & every master ley down iiij d and Colclow shall have 3erely ffor his labor xlvj s viij d & he to bring in to þe master on sonday next after corpus christi day þe originall & ffech his vij nobullez and Colclow must bring in at þe later end of þe termes all þe garments þat longen to þe pajant as good as þey wer delyvered to hym. This was ordeyned in þe time of William Melody Thomas Warner & William byngley þen keepers of þe crafte.²²

Although Colclow was required to 'find þe pleyers', 'find Cloyes' (cloths) to go about the pageant, find 'Russhes þerto' (for the floor of the pageant), 'dyne' with the 'kepers of þe crafte', return the 'originall [the official text of the play] to þe master' on 'sonday next after corpus christi' and return 'all þe garments [costumes]' that belonged to the pageant in the condition 'as good as þey wer delivered to hym', none of these responsibilities refer to his influence over what the players did or the way that they did it. Colclow's duties were concerned with promotion, protection, and preservation of the physical accoutrements belonging to the pageant and the Guild. He was both producer and custodian.

Another contender to be considered as the first English director is another Cornish figure, referred to as the 'conveyour' by two explicit stage directions in

²⁰ REED: *York*, I, 376.

²¹ *Records of Early English Drama: Coventry*, ed. by R. W. Ingram (Toronto: University of Toronto Press; Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1981) [hereafter REED: *Coventry*], pp. 20, 24, 548.

²² REED: *Coventry*, pp. 27–28.

the Cornish *Gwreans An Bys: The Creation of the World* (1611 or possibly as early as the mid-sixteenth century).²³ During the creation of Adam and Eve the stage directions determine that

Adam and Eva aparlet in whytt lether in a place apoynted by the conveyour & not to be sene tyll they be called & thei knell & ryse.

Let adam laye downe & slepe wher eva ys & she by the conveyour must be taken from adam is side.

References to the 'conveyour' in these two stage directions are the only ones contained in the play. At one level requirements of the conveyour are organizational ones of a stage-management kind. However, the conveyour possessed sufficient authority to determine the 'place apoynted' in respect of the positioning of Adam and Eva. The authority seen here is that which in modern practice is associated with the director. However, the action and tasks required of the conveyour by the stage directions are those of a stage-management figure as defined by the functions of today. Like the Ordinary, the conveyour is seen by the audience in fulfilling his role. To all intents and purposes the visible roles of the Ordinary and the conveyour could have been carried out by one and the same person. The evidence, however, contained in the stage directions does not suggest this synonymity. These are similar roles with differently identified functions conducted in full view of the audience. The instigating function of the Ordinary in telling the players what they must say aloud is clearly a more fundamental directorial role in the delivery of the 'Guary miracle' than is the organizational role of the conveyour in the *Gwreans An Bys: The Creation of the World*.

Although the modern roles of producer and stage manager are related to the modern notion of director, so too is the role of author. Sometimes the distinction between authorship and scribal roles is unclear in the available records. Copying out of parts, playbooks, and/or originals does not suggest authorship, but payments for writing of parts and playbooks may imply authorship.²⁴ The roles of author and producer appear to have converged through the work of Thomas Ashton, headmaster of Shrewsbury School during the 1560s and 1570s. *Dr. Taylors History* records:

thise yere at whytsoontyd was a notable stage playe playeed in shrosberie in a place there cally<.> the quarrell [quarry] which lastid all the holly dayes vnto the which cam greate

²³ *Gwreans An Bys: The Creation of the World*, ed. by Whitley Stokes (Berlin: A. Asher, 1863; London: Williams and Norgate, 1864), pp. 28, 32.

²⁴ See my 'Book-Carriers', pp. 25–26.

number of people of noblemen and others the which was prayesd greatlye and the chyffe auctor [author] therof was one master Astoon beinge the head scoolemaster of the free scoole there a godly and lernyd man who toocke marvelous greate paynes therin.²⁵

Here, Ashton is acknowledged as the 'chyffe auctor' but it may be conjectured that he fulfilled other roles in his educational capacity. The boys under his tutelage were no doubt coached in their oratory and thus familiar with being taught how to recite or pronounce given passages. Ashton may well have operated as a director in addition to his other functions, but currently available evidence does not state or confirm this.

Another potentially important figure to be considered is the generically termed 'property player' who operated in Essex, Suffolk, and Kent from early in the sixteenth century to the 1560s.²⁶ As the title implies this figure was responsible for providing properties and costumes for the play and organizing practical arrangements for production. It is the organizational tasks of the property player that draws him into the potential ambit of the director. However, none of the available records concerning the role of the property player, or named individuals who fulfilled such a role, provide evidence of directorial functions.

It is clear from the above accounts of would-be directorial figures that none of them are recorded as having performed functions or tasks of directors. Each of these functionaries possessed authority, albeit of different kinds, that enabled them to complete organizational functions. Some of these duties existed outside the presentation while others operated in and on the performance.

Identification of purpose seems important in attempts to determine why the prompting convention, as described by Carew, existed at all. It is quite clear that the functions of the Ordinary, of a kind dictated by their context, were directorial ones. Additionally, such functions may be seen to have been expository ones, particularly if the player may be considered to have been the mouthpiece of the Ordinary. Consideration of the Ordinary, as expositor, presupposes that there was

²⁵ *Records of Early English Drama: Shropshire*, ed. by J. Alan B. Somerset, 2 vols (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), I, 214.

²⁶ John C. Coldewey, 'That Enterprising Property Player: Semi-Professional Drama in Sixteenth-Century England', *Theatre Notebook*, 31 (1977), 5–12; Meg Twycross, 'Felsted of London: Silk-Dyer and Theatrical Entrepreneur', *Medieval English Theatre*, 10 (1988), 4–16; *Records of Early English Drama: Kent*, ed. by James M. Gibson, 3 vols (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), II, 681–82, 684–87, III, 955–63. The Kent records at Lydd and New Romney do not specifically refer to payments to the property player but the functions referred to are those of the property player.

something to teach. Herein lies the potential purpose of the convention as represented and delivered by the Ordinary. If the principal function of the Ordinary was to teach, then audience acceptance of the convention of prompting in full view of itself was one that could conceivably have taken its integrated place within a theatrical intention. Such an explicit and implicit objective could well have met with audience approbation in support of a convention designed for its purpose.

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